THE ACTOR;

OR, A

TREATISE

ON THE

ART OF PLAYING.

A NEW WORK,

Written by the AUTHOR of the former,

AND

Adapted to the Present State of the THEATRES.

CONTAINING

Impartial OBSERVATIONS on the Performance, Manner, Perfections, and Defects of

Mr. GARRICK,	Mrs. CIBBER,
Mr. BARRY,	Mrs. PRITCHARD,
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In their several CAPITAL PARTS.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

THE ACTOR.

THE INTRODUCTION.

Containing certain general obſervations.

THE intent of this treatiſe is to ſhew what acting truly is; to reduce to rules a ſcience hitherto practiſed almoſt entirely from the fancy; and by that means to aſſiſt certain performers in their attempts to attain perfection in it, and ſome parts of an audience how they may regularly judge of it.

There are actors too great to be taught, and there are judges who need not be aſſiſted: but theſe are few; and the entertainments of a theatre may be of ſo general amuſement, improvement, and utility, that they merit to be ſet on the beſt footing, and rendered as general and as rationally ſatisfactory as poſſible.

The better an audience judges, the better the performers will act: perhaps, to the preſent good taſte in the public is in a great meaſure owing the excellence of the principal among the preſent performers. Theſe, however, muſt die off, and others muſt ſucceed them; and while they remain, others muſt be raiſed among them: for the play in which are the feweſt characters, ſtill has more than there are actors of this claſs. It were to be wiſhed therefore, that thoſe who ſhall ſucceed, and thoſe who at preſent grow up among theſe, ſhould be rendered worthy of either place; and to make them ſo, nothing can be ſo effectual as laying down publickly what are the rules by which they may arrive at perfection. Themſelves will not only be able to know from theſe how they advance toward it, but others will ſee it alſo; and their applauſe will be the ſtrongeſt encouragement,

ragement to application, and their cenſure the greateſt guard againſt neglect.

It has been ſaid of authors, that for one who writes ill, there are ten who judge amiſs: this is not leſs the ſituation of actors and audiences. Even now that there are more judges of acting, than perhaps any period of time has ſhewn together, there are many times the number, who do not judge at all; and for one player who deſerves cenſure, there are a thouſand people ready to condemn him who does not. Theſe take up their opinions from others, and ſuch are always the moſt violent. Perſonal pique, or unguarded prejudice, has condemned ſome actors, who might have riſen to fame, to an obſcurity for life: inattention to the firſt appearances of merit has robb'd it, in others, of that encouragement which alone could bring it to perfection; and in others partiality, or ſome fortunate connection, have ſtood in the place of deſert, and carried thoſe into the principal parts, who have not been worthy of the meaneſt.

Under theſe diſadvantages, real merit has ſometimes made its efforts vainly, and ſometimes has been detered from making them. When the number of thoſe who judge with knowledge and with candour is increaſed, the

performer will have the more ſpirit in ſubmitting his endeavours to their determination: and when he knows by what rules they judge, he will alſo know thoſe by which he ought to conduct himſelf, in his attempts to merit their approbation.

Moſt is required from the principal performers, but much from all: many talents are neceſſary to him who is to impoſe upon the imagination and affect the heart; and this is the buſineſs of every actor. Nature muſt have greatly favoured thoſe from whom this is principally required; and art will in theſe give her amazing aſſiſtances. Art will anſwer the purpoſe almoſt alone to the others. Scarce any man will fail in an attempt to be decent in the ſubordinate parts, who has aſſiduity and underſtanding, provided he knows how to apply them. Youth, figure, and addreſs, are requiſite to the capital performers, but not to many of the others: while thoſe improve and perfect themſelves by art, theſe may form themſelves entirely upon it; and ſo much depends upon theſe, that it is worth while to be at ſome pains in directing their endeavours.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Concerning the powers of nature, and their limits, and of the neceſſity of rules and art to form a perfect player.

IT will be ſaid, that rules and art have little to do in the forming a great player, for that what he is, he muſt be from nature; but every one is formed either upon rules or by imitation; and which of theſe is preferable 'tis eaſy to judge.

We yet ſee thoſe who, in the life-time of ſome of the old players of great name, were allowed to be like them; and we ſee in Mr. Garrick a perſon unlike to them all, and to every thing that ha gone before him: none has ever diſputed whether he or they deſerved the palm; and it is certain that he has formed himſelf by ſtudy, and they by imitation.

We hear of men born players, and this gentleman is mentioned as an inſtance of it; but thoſe who imagine that he has not cultivated with an indefatigable aſſiduity the talents he poſſeſſed from nature, have a very imperfect knowledge of the ſource of that merit which ſo much aſtoniſhes them.

Genius, we hear men ſay, is all; playing is not to be acquired by ſtudy: as it is the

repreſentation of human life, they ſay it ought to be the ſole production of nature; and that to give it rules, is to take from it all its ſpirit. But this is error; it has an appearance of truth, becauſe nature does a great deal, and the conſummate artifice of the performer is to conceal the art by which ſhe is aſſiſted; but ſtill the thing is true, altho' it is not thruſt upon the view; and in general there is moſt where it is leaſt ſeen.

Nature is in nothing ſo conſpicuous, nor in any thing ſo beautiful, as in theatrical repreſentations; nor is there any circumſtance in which her boldeſt flights are more pleaſing: but theſe in the hands of thoſe who pleaſe us moſt, never amount to wildneſs. Theſe actors receive and eſtabliſh nature as the ground-work of all; but they raiſe upon this baſis a ſtructure, in which art has the moſt conſiderable ſhare. The racer may have breath and ſpirit, fleetneſs of foot, and ſtrength to perſevere, yet without the guidance of the rein he may run out of the courſe, and inferior creatures will carry the prize againſt him. We may ſtare at the comet which is loſt in its eccentricity; but we admire more the ſmalleſt of the planets, becauſe it is regular in its period, and we underſtand its motions.

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'Tis ſo with genius in the theatrical performance: when it is ungoverned and undirected we may admire a flight, or ſtare at ſome unexpected ſtroke, but after that we are diſguſted; 'tis only when natural fire is regulated by judgment; when the powers of genius are under the guidance of rule and method; when they know where to expatiate and where to check their impetuoſity; when all their extravagance is too little, and where the leaſt exceſs is too much, that we acknowledge and admire the perfect player.

Nature will carry a man a great way, but ſhe may carry him all the way out of his road: She will be impetuous, but ſhe may be extravagant; and nothing is more contemptible than fury out of ſeaſon. What is magnificent, where there is dignity in the ſubject, and force in the expreſſion to ſupport the violence, may be ridiculous where the ſentiment is poor or the language unelevated. We expect from the player, not to aſtoniſh us with his own ideas, but to repreſent properly to us thoſe of the poet; and the more perfectly he does this, whether noiſe or ſilence effect it, the more is his true praiſe. The actor is as liable to bombaſt as the author; and as he has in general a leſs critical diſcernment,

he is in the more danger. No guard can be too ſtrict againſt this, for no fault is ſo eaſy to be commited; and the place for the caution is where we are conſidering the powers of nature; becauſe it is where they are greateſt that the danger alſo is moſt imminent.

The common fault of the ſubordinate players is, that they cannot ariſe to the dignity of their parts. The moſt natural fault of thoſe who are qualified to be of the firſt claſs, is the ſoaring above their ſubject; and I wiſh it could be ſaid it was not the moſt common. Inſipidity is the general character of inferior performers; and extravagance is too much that of the ſuperior ones. It is happy, that the audience does not ſo readily diſtinguiſh one as the others: for there is always a great part of this aſſembly, to whom noiſe will ſtand in the place of propriety: but thoſe who diſtinguiſh more accurately are offended as much at one as at the other; nay, the cenſure falls almoſt entirely upon the ſuperior claſs: they pity what the others cannot help, but they condemn in theſe what their judgment ought to have taught them to avoid.

There is not any thing that ſo nobly repreſents the great and pathetic thought

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of an author, as the violence, impetuoſity, and fire of the player: his voice often cannot be too loud, his countenance too much inflamed, nor his action too pointed; but it is only where the thought ſupports it that theſe things are proper; and they never are beautiful, except when in their place.

When Shakeſpeare puts into the mouth of his enraged Moor, (glorying in the revenge he had taken on the ſuppoſed deluluder of his wife) this great and ſoldier-like expreſſion,

Had all his hairs been lives,
My great revenge had ſtomach for them all;

we ſee Mr. Barry redden thro' the very black of his face; his whole viſage becomes inflamed, his eyes ſparkle with ſucceſsful vengeance, and he ſeems to raiſe himſelf above the ground while he pronounces it. 'Tis right he ſhould do all this. The ſentiment ſupports it: we feel with him the tranſport the poet felt when he wrote; and tho' there be nothing ſounding in the expreſſion, the thought fills us with great and noble reſentment. As this actor pronounces the words, accompanying the delivery with that exalted and magnificent deport-

ment we feel with the character: we forget that it is a player who ſpeaks, and that it is an imaginary ſcene which is repreſented before us; we conceive the hero and the huſband betray'd, injur'd, and glorying in his inſatiable revenge: we not only ſee the character thus before our eyes, but we feel with him; we pay an involuntary tribute to the author and the player; we glow with their tranſports; the very frame and ſubſtance of our hearts is ſhaken as if conſcious of the ſame due to honour and reſentment, we ſwelled and trembled as he did; like ſtrings which are ſo perfectly concordant, that one being ſtruck, the other anſwers, tho' diſtant. Nay, ſo perfectly does the deluſion poſſeſs us, that we rejoice in the vengeance, and forget for the time that there was no cauſe for the reſentment; that Deſdemona was innocent, or the huſband deceived.

'Tis thus we feel, as if they were our own, the ſentiments and paſſions repreſented by a good writer, and animated by a performer who has judgment and genius; but altho' this force and vehemence, this tranſport of glorying rage, which diſplays itſelf in the voice, look, geſture, and whole frame and deportment of the actor, be ſo great and commendable here, we often ſee

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the ſame efforts made by others, where they are neither great nor graceful, where they take no effect upon us; and this for the plaineſt reaſon in the world, becauſe they are not proper.

Nothing is ſo excellent as this vehemence where there is paſſion to authoriſe it, but where the actor expreſſes, in all this fury, ſome ſentiment which the author meant, as quiet and conſiderate; perhaps as great but at the ſame time cool, (for there is ſuch a thing as magnificence with compoſure) we are diſguſted inſtead of being charm'd, as in the former inſtance; we feel nothing of this fury, becauſe neither the thought nor ſentiment awake any of it, and we deſpiſe the player who forces it upon us out of ſeaſon.

There is great beauty in giving force and weight to the expreſſion, but where the actor does not know how to do this in the right place, he never can be ſure to give us pleaſure by it; for nothing can be beautiful that wants this appropriation. It would be ill natured to produce inſtances of this fault, nor is it needful, for they will riſe in ſufficient number to every one's memory; but it is here more than on all other occaſions, that the force of the obſervation is evident, that nature, be ſhe ever ſo powerful, re-

quires to be guided by art. Nature may give a player voice, figure, and expreſſive action; and by means of theſe he may be enabled to do all, or a very great part at leaſt of thoſe things for which the player laſt named is ſo conſpicuous: but if he have not judgment, he never will be able to make the heart acknowledge him an actor. To be able to ſurprize, is the firſt quality of a player, but the next, which is of equal importance, is to know where to do it. Nature gives the powers for the one, but judgment only can conduct the other, and we ſee, that unleſs both concur, the effect of all the ſtrength of nature is loſt. Judgment, as well as expreſſion and geſture, may indeed in ſome degree be the gift of nature; but to improve and render it uſeful, rules are to be obſerv'd. Playing is a ſcience, and is to be ſtudied as a ſcience; and he who, with all that nature ever did, or can do for a man, expects to ſucceed wholly without the effects of that ſtudy, deceives himſelf extremely.

We have ſeen the philoſophic Tamerlane ſtrut and throw his arms about like a mad Oreſtes, and we have ſeen the moſt ſedate ſentiments of morality thundered out with the rage and force of a barbarian

tyrant;

tyrant; but none, who had more faculties for judging than the bare power of hearing, ever gave the noiſy performer applauſe.

But this error of being loud and vehement, where there is not occaſion, is carried a great deal farther. This and the reſt that have been named, are inſtances how improper it is to be noiſy where the author never intended paſſion; but there are paſſages in which tranquility is not only proper, but neceſſary: in theſe things it is decent, but in the others it is a beauty, a great one, and the only one of which the part is capable.

It is peculiar to dramatic writing, that the diſpoſitions and tempers of the characters are not deſcribed but repreſented; they are not ſaid to be calm on this occaſion, and furious on another, but the frame and manner of the expreſſion ſhew it: 'tis this characteriſtic manner of the author which the player is above all other things to ſtudy, for 'tis on this that his great merit in repreſenting to us the hero, as the writer drew him, will depend. This is more obvious and eaſy where violence and paſſion are pointed out, but it is always more delicate, and always more graceful, often alſo more great, in the tranquil ſcene: and here it is that the judgment of the actor is required

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to find it out. Noiſe and violence are not the certain marks of dignity. We often miſs the divine ſpirit in the lightning and the whirlwind, to diſtinguiſh it in the ſtill ſmall voice. Here it is that the greateſt diſcernment of an actor is ſhewn, in underſtanding the intent of the author; and his higheſt judgment in repreſenting the temper of his mind as the other intended.

If an hiſtorian had been to deſcribe king Richard the night before the deciſive battle of Boſworth, or an heroic poet to celebrate the greatneſs of his mind, viſible in his compoſure, they could have only told us, that he was unmoved at the approach of danger. Thucydides or Virgil could have done no more: all the rhetoric of the one could only have collected certain circumſtances to ſhew it, and all the elegance of the other could have gone no farther than a beautiful deſcription; but the dramatic writer had a ſuperior advantage, and that writer who has immortalized the hero as much as he has himſelf in this play, knew how to make the moſt of that advantage: above dully relating the circumſtance to the ear, he addreſſes it to the imagination. He introduces the king, whoſe crown and life were ſtak'd upon the fortune of the enſuing day, taſting the freſh

freſh breeze of evening, and enjoying the common incidents of the time.

The air's refreſhing,
And the ripe harveſts of the new mown hay
Diffuſe a pleaſing odour.

The intent of the author is to repreſent the tranquility of a great mind in time of danger; and he rightly judged, that nothing could more perfectly ſhew the hero. Richard in this ſcene is in the ſituation of one of our officers, who as he was marching up to a deſperate attack took notice of a pelican flying over his head, and obſerved, that it would make good ſoup. The circumſtances are alike, except that there is nothing low or particular in the incident that ſhews the tranquility of the ſovereign. The praiſe of either is the perfect calmneſs in the time of terror, and this is what the author intended to expreſs, and has moſt happily expreſs'd in the lines. The actor of judgment would diſtinguiſh this, and the point he would aim at would be to pronounce them with the moſt perfect eaſe and compoſure, with an unruffled air, and in a ſoft and undiſturb'd voice. The great beauty in ſuch a paſſage, is, to throw off every thing that is generally underſtood as

beauty

beauty in theatrical recitation: yet we have heard theſe lines barked out with all the vehemence of paſſion, by a player of reputation; and we have ſeen no ſignal of diſſatisfaction in the audience.

Applauſe in wrong places is the deſtruction of half our players; and this acquieſcence, where there are faults ſo palpable, has almoſt as bad an effect upon them: that performer may be aſſured, that the weakeſt of his audience never heard this with pleaſure, and the more judicious always with diſapprobation.

This is one of the many inſtances in which we ſee how difficult it is for the player to content himſelf with doing little enough; innumerable more might be recited, and this is one of thoſe circumſtances under which we ſee the immediate neceſſity of judgment. Nature has given an actor what are called powers; that is, ſhe has given him a ſtrong voice and a free uſe of his limbs, and he thinks he has nothing to do but to employ them. Judgment would tell him when there is merit in letting them lie unexerted; and this he will have from that art and thoſe rules by which we would have him guide himſelf, in many inſtances, in which the beauty of

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conducting himſelf properly would be very evident, tho' the fault is not ſo obvious.

An hundred people know how to indulge their natural faculties, for one who has the art to check them; but on ſuch a regulation depends all the glory of the compleat performer: and we are more inclined to pardon the faults of one who, with little talents, endeavours by induſtry and application to bring himſelf to ſome merit, than him who diſguſts us with the extravagances of natural beauties.

The common miſtake of indulging theſe exceſſes of what nature has given, and the difficulty of conducting even little powers with prudence, are the too great reaſons why we ſee ſo few of thoſe ſucceed who offer themſelves for the ſtage. Many of theſe have talents; but they are altogether deficient in judgment. Thoſe who have been practiſed in their profeſſion, if they have as little of that as the other, yet have a ſort of experience which ſtands in the place of knowledge; and it is not ſo much from the want of powers as the deficience of this experience, or of what rules and art would much better do in its place, that they ſo ſeldom ſucceed.

In general it may be aſſerted, that if a perſon ever ſo well formed by nature for the

the ſtage, offer himſelf without advice, and merely from an opinion that he can do what he has ſeen done before, he will fail: on the other hand, if another of very inferior accompliſhments, make the ſame attempt under the direction of ſome eſtabliſhed player, and liſten for a conſiderable time to his admonitions, he ſhall ſucceed. Nature alone, tho' capable of doing ever ſo much under proper regulations, will be bewildered and loſt under the want of thoſe cautions; whereas with their aſſiſtance, the perſon ſhall be decent in a firſt attempt, who never will be more than decent afterwards. So great an error is it that nature alone makes the player, and ſo vaſt the advantages which even the higheſt talents will acquire from regulation.

CHAP. II.

Of the neceſſity of a good underſtanding to the player.

IT will appear from the obſervations already made, that among the advantages which a player is to have from nature, an underſtanding is the principal; for to that he is to owe the proper uſe of all the reſt. If he who has it in his power to be noiſy, does not know when to be moderate, all the ſtrength of voice which he can poſſeſs

poſſeſs will ſerve only to make him extravagant in ſome things, and ridiculous in others. It is neceſſary that a man ſhould comprehend his words perfectly before he can deliver them properly; and among the dramatic poets of fame, there are ſome whom no one will ever comprehend who has not a very good underſtanding.

Aaron Hill, an author of allowed merit, requires to be ſtudied as a claſſic. This he in general owes to the peculiar arrangement and diſpoſition of his words: Johnſon has often his thought ſo deep, that there requires the ſame degree of penetration to be a maſter of his ſenſe, and often he owes this to his own ſuperior knowledge, and to his expecting too much in his reader: Milton, (for ſome of his pieces are acted, and ſome more might with a little alteration) is obſcure to the ignorant, from his very phraſe; and Shakeſpeare, the deſerved idol of the preſent ſtage, altho' he never perplexes by his learning, which ſome have ſuppoſed he altogether wanted, yet by the boldneſs of his figures, and the ſhortneſs of his expreſſion, his half-antiquated words, and frequent and ſlightly expreſſed alluſions, he is as eaſily read, without being underſtood, as any of them.

If any one of theſe authors be put into the hands of an ordinary perſon, and it be

be expected of him to read aloud ſome paſſage which is new to him, it will be found, that tho' he pronounces all the words, he will miſs the greateſt part of the meaning. The falſe accent and force, or even, if it be no more, the want of the true and proper emphaſis, will betray him; and it will be juſt ſo, or worſe with the actor, who wants that ſhare of genius which is neceſſary to underſtand what a larger portion of it produced. Thus, certainly, the player will fail, and thus he will betray himſelf, who has not an underſtanding; thus we ſee many fail entirely, and too much of this groſs defect we diſcover in ſome who are well received.

Indeed, the not underſtanding an author, as it is the greateſt of all defects in the performer, ſo it is the moſt eaſily diſcovered by the auditor, who has any better ſhare of underſtanding. A bellowing, and ſtruting, and ſtaring, and toſſing about of the arms may do with the meaner part of an audience; but where the player has not true feeling, which he can never have without a perfect underſtanding of his part, all force is ineffectual; 'tis out of place, and out of tune; and tho' the inſtrument be ever

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ſo fine, the ill player upon it produces only diſcords.

It will be ſaid, that imitation will ſupply the place of underſtanding, and that having obſerved in what manner another pronounces any ſentence, the performer may give it utterance in the ſame cadence; an ear anſwering the purpoſes of underſtanding. Too many players are of this opinion; but it is ſetting their profeſſion very low, it is reducing that to a mechanical art which was intended to exert all the force of genius; but as it is contemptible, it is alſo imperfect. If this be the rule, what is to become of the new plays, or what are the audience to expect in the others? if the former players ſhould have been in any thing imperfect or falſe, there is an end of all advances in the art; and if this were the univerſal, as it is too much the general rule, to what end ſhould ſuch a perſon as Garrick have been born: a man who has ſtruck out of his own mind a manner of playing many things, as Shakeſpeare's Lear, and many more that might be inſtanced, quite different from what ever was before ſeen or conceived; and who has, by the ſole force of genius, found ways of making up for all thoſe things in which nature has left him deficient. She gave him an underſtanding

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in the place of all theſe, and it has anſwered all their purpoſes. As ſhe has dealt with man in reſpect of other animals, ſo ſhe has dealt with this performer in reſpect of other players. While ſhe deny'd to man the fur of the bear, and the talons of the eagle, the wings of the kite, and the ſtrength of the horſe, ſhe gave him underſtanding, by which he could contrive for himſelf cloaths and weapons, and conveniences of carriage; and by which, maſtering thoſe creatures that were ſo much ſtronger than himſelf, he ſhould be able to employ their ſtrength to his purpoſes. Thus, tho' ſhe has denied to Mr. Garrick the natural dignity of Mr. Quin, the ſoftneſs of Mr. Barry, and (but for that we muſt go farther than the preſent age) the eaſy politeneſs for which Wilks was ſo eſteemed, ſhe has given him a comprehenſion, which ſeeing all theſe in their true colours, has introduced ſomething in the place of every one of them, that exceeds the firſt, very nearly equals the ſecond, and perhaps is yet more pleaſing than the laſt.

Had imitation alone been the ſource of good acting, we had loſt all that this amazing player has ſhewn us; nor do we want inſtances, even among ſome who are greatly received, how imperfect that

playing

playing is, which is derived principally from that ſource. In the ſiege of Damaſcus, to the diſcerning reader I need not ſay where play'd, or in which character, we ſee ſome miſerable defects: the tone, the geſture, the look, all declare the performer applauded by the rabble, to be repeating a ſchool-boy's leſſon, which his maſter has compelled him to get by rote; but of which he has taken no pains to give him the meaning. Cadence and variety in recitation are worſe than the deficience of them where they are not proper, as we would pardon inſenſibility rather than abſurdity. I have obſerved that it is not neceſſary to tell the judicious in whom theſe faults are to be found in that play; and it is not in the ſcheme of this treatiſe, to inform others. It is not intended to ſhew thoſe where to cenſure, who do not know where to praiſe.

We ſee by this how imperfect, as well as how mean a way imitation is, to arrive at the character of an actor; and we ſee at the ſame time a proof of what was to be made out in this place, that an underſtanding is the greateſt requiſite of a player. We ſee it indeed in the light of one ſo eſſential, that we may be certain they err who ſuppoſe they are able to produce in-

ſtances

ſtances of the contrary; and to point out to us good players who have bad underſtandings. They err certainly; and the truth lies in one of theſe exceptions: either the players they mean have better underſtandings than they perceive, or they are not ſo good performers as they ſuppoſe them.

Diſcernment and apprehenſion are neceſſary in the greateſt degree to the player, and theſe are inſeparable from a good underſtanding. He muſt be able to expreſs beauties of all ſorts and kinds; and to do this properly, he muſt firſt diſtinguiſh what they are; for every one of them requires a different expreſſion. When it is neceſſary for him to expreſs paſſion, it is not enough that he have lungs and eyes; he muſt not only be able to raiſe it to the proper height, but he muſt know what that proper height is; and in a thouſand various ſcenes where this is required, he muſt determine what is the degree in which it is neceſſary in each. Nature may have given him the powers of voice and the command of tears, but not the diſtinguiſhing judgment, how high the one is to be carried; or whether, or in what quantity the other are to be poured out, to diſtreſs. A ſingle word pronounced with

with ſtrength in a ſentence, may convey more terror than the moſt violent manner of delivering the whole; and one tear may be graceful and great, where a ſhower of them would be effeminate. Shakeſpear intended a very ſevere menace from his Henry, where he only ſays to the hot youth.

Send us your priſoners, or you'll hear of it.

But a great deal of the force depends upon the manner of the actor's pronouncing it. To deliver it with noiſe and violence were to bully; it were unworthy of a king, and unlike the character of that king in particular. The old players, who lived near the time of the author, entered more into his ſpirit: whether from underſtanding or tradition, that it always had been ſo, they uttered it in a low voice, but with a rough tone; and ſo far our players imitate them: but that is not all that is expected, or all they did in it. The author meant the whole terror of the threat to be conveyed in the ſingle word, *hear*; a word which naturally did not expreſs any great matter, but which he intended the voice of the performer, who conceived his meaning, ſhould make terrible. This

was done at that time; but how it was effected, we cannot gueſs by any thing we ſee now; for our players tho' they have preſerved the low voice, have loſt the emphaſis. There was a way of pronouncing this ſingle word with ſtrength without loudneſs; and this was the way in which the menace had its full terror. Our players affect to give this tone to the whole ſentence; but in attempting this they loſe the force of the whole.

As this is an inſtance in which an expreſſion full of meaning requires to be delivered without noiſe; and to have a ſingle word in it marked and characteriſed, not by the loudneſs, but by the peculiar force and ſpirit it gains from the emphaſis: there are others in which the ſame ſpirit that is to animate that ſingle word, is to convey meaning to the whole ſentence; and in which, inſtead of this low voice to all but the one important word, there is to be force and ſtrength, with ſome degree of loudneſs, given to every one. Theſe are ſentences in which the thought is great, and the whole full of feeling; but the words common, plain, and deſtitute of all peculiar dignity. A glorious inſtance we have of this in the character of Lear; and we ſee it glorioufly executed. When the

old king has killed the murderers with his own hand, and one who is preſent takes notice of it, all that the fulneſs of his heart can give him to utter is:

——*did I not, fellow!*

And yet there is a dignity and conſcious pride, and triumph expreſſed in theſe four common words, that hardly any thing can equal.

Shakeſpear is peculiar for the frequent uſe of ſuch expreſſions, and the occaſion of it is evident: genius being prevalent in him, and improvement too much wanting, his dignity generally lies in the thought, not in the phraſe; but theſe are paſſages which an ordinary reader will paſs over unobſerved; and we ſee nothing of their beauty, but when the actor gives them force by his proper delivery.

It has been obſerved already, that as a ſingle word will ſometimes do more than a whole ſentence, ſo one tear wil affect an audience, where they would have deſpiſed a flood of them. The ſingle drop of ſorrow, the involuntary tribute of humanity, may be great and graceful, while the profuſion of tears would be unworthy and contemptible: With the hero, it were well that

the man were alſo remembered; and the poet as well as the player will be more natural, and conſequently will have more merit if he keep up to the ſentiment. He who ſhewed what was nature and what was dignity ſo well, puts this into the mouth of his Macduff; and while he makes his heroe bear ſorrows like a man, alſo ſuffers him to feel them like one.

From this conſideration, were I an actor who had power to do it, I would make a ſingle tear ſteal down the unaltered face of Cato while he ſpeaks the famous line:

Thanks to the gods, my boy has done his duty.

This I would do, tho' at the expence of ſtriking out the ſucceeding obſervation, "that Rome filled his eyes with tears that "flow'd not o'er his own dead ſon". As it is, there is ſomething brutal in the ſeverity of Cato; and virtue never took that character. The Roman, rigid and firm as he was, yet muſt be a man as well as a heroe; and I would let the man weep while the heroe triumphed. No matter that the virtue and ſteadineſs of Cato diſdained the womaniſh effect of ſorrow, let nature and the father, if not take their

turns,

turns, at leaſt ſo far mingle themſelves with the General and the Roman: and while his dignity diſowned the tear, ſtill let humanity and paternal affection call it forth. The reſignation and triumph of the illuſtrious character would thus be ſeen with redoubled luſtre, becauſe we ſhould ſee the parent and the man at the bottom: without it the greatneſs of the ſentiment carries with it ſomething barbarous.

All the advantages a player can poſſibly have from nature will ſerve him to little purpoſe, unleſs he have underſtanding to regulate them. The beſt figure in the world, as it may be diſgraced by bad, ſo it may be rendered contemptible by injudicious attitudes; and all the expreſſion of countenance that man ever had the power of exerting, will be uſeleſs, unleſs he can diſtinguiſh in every ſcene, and under every circumſtance in what degree to exert it; and how to accommodate it, not only to the peculiar nature of the paſſion which he is to paint, but to the exact degree of that paſſion diſcloſed in that particular circumſtance.

He is not only to be able to do juſtice to the expreſſion of the poet; he muſt be able to communicate to it grace, where that is wanting, and force, where that is

proper: and he muſt know how to do this in a juſt degree: for as too much vehemence renders things extravagant, and converts what is great and magnificent in itſelf into bombaſt; ſo an over abundance of this grace degenerates into grimace and buffoonery, and makes that ridiculous which was intended to be engaging.

There are paſſages in which this redundant grace is as proper as the vehement force and extravagant energy; but they are ſuch as are intended for bombaſt and buffoonery. The violence and fury may be proper in Tom Thumb, which would be contemptible even in Bajazet; and the addreſs of captain Plume to the

Peerleſs princeſs of Salopian plains,

cannot poſſibly be too much loaded with graces. Theſe things however are only ſet off by extravagance, becauſe they are intended to be out of nature: as for the reſt, the very means by which they are rendered violent, muſt be ſufficient to make every thing ſerious contemptible. There are many inſtances alſo in which the author has been able only to ſketch out the out-line of what is to be done, and it is left to the actor or player to add the

light

light, and finiſh, or in a great meaſure to make the picture. In this caſe he is not only to convey all the graces the author directs, but to add new ones. More is required than to underſtand the author perfectly; the actor is to be in ſome degree an author himſelf; and his executing this is as commendable, as his adding to the words, or altering them, is abominable: to do this with advantage requires a genius ſuperior to that of the poet; but we find it difficult enough to meet with players who have the ſufficient comprehenſion.

Of theſe additional graces there is room for a great many in the character of captain Brazen; and they have generally been thrown in by the actor very ſucceſſfully. Mr. Cibber has told me, that the author, when the play was originally acted, complimented him upon this ſubject. His ſon is very happy in a great many of theſe additional graces; and Mr. Woodward throws in ſeveral, never thought of by either of theſe performers, and moſt of them very proper and characteriſtical.

In tragedy we owe a late and very beautiful inſtance of what may be done in this way to Mr. Barry. When the officer is preſſing the Earl of Eſſex not to prolong

the time as he goes to execution, his lady ſwooning, the author * only puts into his mouth the two ſhort and ſingle words:

Look there!

Perhaps he expected that the actor ſhould exhibit a diſtreſs which no words could expreſs in his looks and attitude; but if he did expect this, ſtill Mr. Barry muſt have outgone all his imagination; and have obtained from him all the praiſe that Farquar could have beſtowed upon the original Brazen. The added grace deſerved vaſtly the more praiſe, as it was more difficult: tragedy being a much nicer thing than comedy: and it being much more difficult to ſucceed in the ſoftneſs and diſtreſs of ſuch a ſcene, than in one where little more was required than an abſence of all ſhame. Certainly the broken and ſcarcely articulate voice in which this player delivers the two ſhort words; the anguiſh of his look, and the grace of his attitude, are at laſt equal to any thing the preſent age ſhews, or has ſhewn on the ſtage upon a ſimilar occaſion. We frequently ſee the author's expreſſion raiſed by theſe means to an height of which we have not any conception in the bare reading; but

* Jones.

that's

that's not all; a look, a geſture, a peculiar attention to what is ſaying by ſome other, often does what the author had omitted, perhaps neceſſarily, perhaps careleſsly; and very frequently a pauſe ſhall add to the force of a ſentence, more than all that is contained in it.

The player may have from nature a great deal of the pathetick, and may be able very happily to raiſe the paſſions of an audience by raiſing them firſt in himſelf; for this is the great art of doing it. But ſtill, if this power is not under the guidance of a good underſtanding, it will oftener expoſe him who poſſeſſes it to contempt, than raiſe him any applauſe. Nature will do all that can be expected as to the execution of theſe things alone, but nature will not be able to guide and regulate them, unleſs with the feeling, there be an underſtanding, and that be employed in attention to rules. Without this, nature, be ſhe ever ſo powerful, goes blindly as well as violently on; and the more violently, the more blindly always; without knowing whither ſhe is to direct her courſe: ſhe is a ſhip crouded with ſail, but truſted to the ſea without ballaſt; ſhe will make her way violently but irregularly for a time, yet will ſoon be overſet. He who is able to

excite paſſions in himſelf, and cauſe them in others, is yet but half qualified for ſhining in this part of his profeſſion, unleſs he knows what paſſion is peculiar to the preſent circumſtance; and what is the exact degree in which it is required. It would be eaſy to produce inſtances, among the preſent players, of thoſe who have ſo much ſenſibility, that they will cry when they ſhould be angry. The buſineſs is therefore, not how much of this quality they have, but how it is regulated. Crying may be the effect of anger in a boy, but it is to produce ſuch as are very different in an heroe. Theſe people make a miſtake when they ſuppoſe this an excellence: The paſſion they exhibit is their own, and not that of the character.

In the ſame manner I have ſeen an angry king as violent as one would wiſh to ſee him, and full of real feeling, but feeling of a wrong kind. His rage has been that of a cook in his kitchen; not that of one whom his author meant to exhibit *every inch a king*. Here, as in the former inſtance, natural powers anſwer no purpoſe, becauſe they want an underſtanding to guide them; or becauſe that underſtanding wants to be put into method or rule. The reader will not be at a loſs to recollect the in-

inſtances, tho' I do not name them; and he will perceive that a real want of underſtanding is the fault in one caſe; and in the other, the neglect of cultivating an underſtanding. So much depends upon this, and yet it is ſo often miſtaken, that I have known a player who poſſeſſed a great deal of this faculty, make the audience laugh, where the author intended they ſhould weep.

The poet diſtinguiſhes between anger as in one perſon, and anger as in another. Courage is the great quality of all Homer's heroes; and yet the courage of one is quite different from the courage of another. The dramatick writer has the ſame diſtinction of character in his eye, and he has more opportunity for exerting it, than the heroic. Sorrow in one perſon is one thing, and in another, another; and ſo of all the other paſſions; and this he regards: but all his merit is in vain, if the player does not mind it. There are parts of a character alſo, as there are in painting parts of a picture, which are to be ſet in a full view, and parts that are to be obſcured, tho' they are preſerved, and hid in ſhade. This the dramatick writer, who is qualify'd for what he undertakes, never fails to regard in the ſtricteſt manner; but it is in vain alſo that he pays his attention to it, if the actor has

not the diſcernment to ſee it, and the underſtanding to tell him why, as well as how it is done, and how he is to join in it. Otherwiſe he expoſes himſelf, and robs the author of his greateſt beauty. A boiſterous manner, where the ſentiment indicates calmneſs; or a loud and thundering delivery, where compoſure and ſofteneſs are neceſſary, and were intended by the author, will bring that forward, which was intended to be concealed in ſhades; and by that very error obſcure and drown the luſtre of that which was intended to be conſpicuous. There are abundant inſtances of this maſterly addreſs in the poet, in the part of Macbeth. I wiſh we could ſay that one actor who has been applauded in the part, had ſhewn himſelf ſenſible of them, or that any had conceived them all Mr. Garrick is eminent in many parts of Macbeth; but this does not appear to be one of thoſe characters he has moſt ſtudied. Mr. Barry alſo is excellent in a great part of it; but it does not ſeem one of thoſe parts moſt ſuited to that performer.

As in the landſcape, ſo in the repreſentation of the ſtage, things in their own place very remote, are obliged to be repreſented in a ſmall compaſs; the field is large

that

that affords the view for the one, and the human mind, which is repreſented in the other is yet more extenſive. Where ſo many things, ſo diſtant in themſelves, are to be thrown ſo near together, there requires great art to ſhew that they are not joined to each other: in the ſcene, as well as in the picture, there is required what is called *keeping*; but as the painter's principal ſkill is to mark the diſtances, the player's is to ſhew the removes thro' which tranſitions are made from one to the other; and great care is to be taken not to confound one with another, becauſe they happen to ſucceed.

Underſtanding is required to direct the player to convey the ſentiment his author intends, but a nicer degree of judgment yet is neceſſary, to direct with what force they ſhall be conveyed. The geſtures which are to accompany the expreſſion, are to be as much ſtudied as the tone of voice in which it is delivered; and in all this underſtanding muſt direct, elſe all the powers nature can beſtow will avail nothing. There are paſſages, it muſt be confeſſed, which the author has ſo put down that they cannot be miſrepreſented: but theſe are few; they are only found in the greateſt writers, and they are ſuch as have little

little paſſion. Moral ſentences and figures, with the habit of deſcription, are the parts of a work that will thus command applauſe howſoever they are ſpoken. We have inſtances of theſe in Comus. That glorious moral ſentiment,

Virtue could ſee to do what Virtue ought
By her own radiant light tho' ſun and moon
Were in the flat ſeas ſunk,

is one of the firſt kind, and the ſame piece which affords it, gives us a very beautiful example of the other, where the poet giving life to Wiſdom as a creature, ſays, that ſhe

Oft ſeeks a ſweet retired ſolitude,
Where with her beſt nurſe Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That in the various buſtle of reſort
Were all too ruffled, and ſometimes impaired.

Paſſages like theſe require nothing more than to be delivered plainly: ſo that it is ſcarce poſſible to miſrepreſent them, yet even theſe acquire a new beauty when pronounced by a judicious performer.

Thoſe

Thoſe who are for making an underſtanding leſs neceſſary for ſucceeding on the ſtage, ſay, that long habit and familiarity will ſupply the place of judgment: but they err; they never will. All that there is of truth in the inſinuation is, that imitation will ſometimes ſupply its place; for it is this, and not familiarity, that does it in theſe inſtances; but it is but very partially that this ſucceeds. The copyiſt ſhall give us ſatisfaction in ſome ſtriking ſcene, becauſe he thus remembers exactly what he has ſeen; but in all the leſs remarkable paſſages, having not paid the ſame attention, he is, altho' theſe are much eaſier, quite contemptible.

In the ſame manner the powers of nature may ſometimes ſtand in the place of judgment; but it is only partially; a man who happens to have ſome ſingularity in his character, which is the ſame with that draw by the poet in ſome ſcene, ſhall in that particular part be very happy. Thus, if impudence or ſtupidity be the characteriſtick in any particular part in a play, one who is impudent or ſtupid in nature, may poſſibly appear very happily in it. This natural power can do without judgment, but this is all they can do: let the ſame perſon attempt any thing elſe, and the deception

ception vaniſhes; we find we ſaw the man, when we ſuppoſed it was the actor we admired.

Authors owe more of their ſucceſs to good actors than they imagine; the miſchiefs they receive from bad ones are not nearly ſo great. An actor of this latter ſtamp, and too many are too near it, ſhall damn a good piece, but it will recover its credit in the reading; on the other hand, when an author is ſo happy, that a piece with but little merit falls into the hands of a manager who will give all the parts, great as well little, to performers who have underſtanding, the play ſhall acquire new graces in the performance: beauties the author never thought of, but which the actor of this kind throws in from his own ſtore, and they ſhall continue with it, they ſhall be remembered in the reading, and placed to the account of the author. Comedy is more ſuſceptible of theſe additional graces than tragedy, in as much as delicacy and politeneſs are eaſier added by the player than dignity. Tragedy is indeed to ſupport itſelf by the ſentiment, comedy in a great degree by the manner. We need not be at a loſs to recollect a modern comedy, in which the principal performer communicated by his action an air of nature

ture to that which was in itself forced and extravagant; who screened the loweſt things from contempt by that decent dignity he added from his manner, and whoſe air and deportment rallied the men of ſpirit and intrigue as the author intended to do, but in places where all that he had written contributed very little toward it. This is a play, which, if it had never been acted, had never been read with any degree of approbation; but having obtained a character on the ſtage, preſerved it in the cloſet.

All this the actor has done in the preſent, and the ſame actor has done as much in many other leſs notorious inſtances: And could this be done without an underſtanding? Certainly no. He muſt firſt conceive perfectly well what an author meant, and he muſt know what he ought to have meant; who is able thus to improve his plan: but indeed the actors who are eminent in comedy, are not ſo liable to be ſuſpected of this deficience as thoſe in tragedy. What they do is a great deal and is ſeen, and every body is able to judge of it; on the contrary, thoſe who perform principally in tragedy, are moſt ſuſpected, but it is without reaſon; for tho' leſs is required of them, and it is not ſo eaſy to judge of it, certainly that little

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is much more difficult, and it is much harder to pleaſe in it the few who can judge.

A much greater comprehenſion is required to underſtand the ſcope of the tragic writer, than to take in all the intention of the comic; and a good underſtanding is no where ſo neceſſary as to do this juſtly. Where then is the probability he ſhould ſucceed who does not come up to the character? 'Tis true, there was a time when blank verſe was all ſpoken too much alike, and this ſort of recitative might as eaſily be chanted out by a weak man as a wiſe one; but whatever might be the caſe in thoſe days, there is now a more natural way of delivery. Were the ſtricteſt meaſure introduced, a deficience is eaſier ſeen in tragedy than comedy.

Indeed, before we argue on any point, we ought to underſtand and ſettle the meaning of our terms. Thoſe who ſay, that certain players, altho' they ſucceed in a number of different characters, yet are deficient in ſenſe, do not exactly mean what they ſay; all that is to be underſtood by the words is, they have not that kind of ſenſe which theſe criticks eſteem ſo highly, that they allow no other the name: but tho' they want this, they may, and they muſt

muſt have ſenſe of another kind, and that probably more uſeful.

That kind of ſenſe which gratifies the man of figure for ſhining in converſation, is very different from that by which the trader amaſſes a fortune; at leaſt, they are different modes, in which the ſame underſtanding exerts itſelf: and it is thus between the ſedate good player, and the flighty cenſurer of his underſtanding, who yet allows merit in his performances. Things are ſome for oſtentation, others for uſe. I need not ſay which ought to be moſt valued. The pomegranate, which bears no fruit, produces a profuſion of double flowers, while thoſe of the tree of uſe are ſingle and ſparingly beſtowed on it. There is a kind of ſenſe, that ſerves for ſhew and parade, but which the very poſſeſſors of it know never ſerved them to any uſeful purpoſe; this theſe players want, but they have in the place of it that which extorts praiſe in the way of their profeſſion, even from their enemies.

Of whatever kind the ſenſe of theſe people may be, or in whatever degree they poſſeſs it, they have made the beſt poſſible uſe of it, and it would not be eaſy to give them greater praiſe. That certain applauſe which attends them on the ſtage, is an irrefragable

refragable argument againſt the cavils of theſe criticks.

That we allow ſenſe to the players who excel in comedy, but diſpute it with reſpect to thoſe who do well in tragedy, is owing to the nature of their ſubjects, and is not much to our credit. That the one muſt have this neceſſary quality as well as the other, is plain from what has been obſerved already, but we do not equally diſcern the effects of it. The addreſs of the actor in comedy is open to every body; but that of the tragedian, is more delicate, and therefore leſs obvious. A whimſical ſchool-boy, or a drunken porter, may do in nature a great deal that would pleaſe in the comic actor. Extravagance, aſſurance, and grimace, are things very eaſy; they require no knowledge, ſcarce any underſtanding, and are owing often to the abſence of modeſty and good qualities, rather than to the poſſeſſion of any others: yet theſe are things the multitude admire in the comic actor: on the contrary, dignity of deportment and a juſt expreſſion, a perfect comprehenſion of an elegant author, and a perfect delivery of his meaning, are the requiſites to him who is to be no more than decent in tragedy. Theſe may all be poſſeſſed without ſhew, and every

every where a vulgar eye will not diſcover them. An edifice built according to all the rules of architecture, where there is a decent magnificence diffuſed over the whole, and compoſure and harmony in every part, ſhall not ſtrike the common eye, with all its elegance. But if the ſame obſerver ſee ſome ſtructures of the revived Gothick, or be led to the extravagance of a dome of this taſte upon a Grecian building, he ſhall gaze and expreſs admiration. Joy ſhall fill his heart,

Joy innocent of thought,

If he ſee the ſun, the moon, and ſeven ſtars all ſhining together in the ſcene; tho' he look with unconcern upon the glory of the one, or the placid light of the other in the firmament: and thus it fares with the players in the eyes of ſuch judges: things that are very great are overlooked, while extravagance and effrontery carry all before them. In tragedy we feel, and the ſentiment has all the praiſe: in comedy we expect only to laugh, and the performer is expected to excite a great part of our merryment. Provided we laugh we are ſatisfied; and while the actor excites it, we never regard whether we laugh at his part, or

or at himſelf, whether it be a laugh of contempt or approbation. In general, he minds the diſtinction no more than we do; and while all are pleaſed, what is there wanting? Nothing, unleſs it be a real and a reaſonable applauſe.

There are farces at which we never fail to laugh, tho' we confeſs they are ſo fooliſh that we are aſhamed of laughing at them. The caſe is the ſame with ſome of the comic characters, as we ſee them repreſented: but the actor is ſatisfied; he receives the contempt for applauſe, and he repeats, as often as he is called upon, the occaſion of it. I have ſeen the greater part of an audience laugh very heartily at a Lord Foppington, who had nothing of the gentleman in his addreſs, manner, or appearance; they were pleaſed, and the performer has been pleaſed, when he has heard them ſay, as they came down the ſtairs, Well, that's a comical fellow. The greateſt part expect nothing more, and the reſt laugh as they do, at the Stage-Coach, or at a Duke and no Duke, tho' they confeſs they are aſhamed of themſelves for their merriment.

Thus we ſee what excites great applauſe in the comic actor, may be even in the groſſeſt manner faulty: much more evident is it, that if his faults can paſs for excellencies,

iencies, the leaſt of his real excellencies muſt be very conſpicuous. It is much otherwiſe in tragedy. There the leaſt exceſs is hateful, and nothing but a perfect and proper ſenſe of the character can keep the player from contempt, tho' he may have a thouſand beauties; which even the candid will not ſee, their whole attention being employed on the ſentiment, ſo that they pay no regard to the decent delicacy of the expreſſion of it by the actor, tho' the leaſt fault in it would have given them offence.

The great difference turns upon this, that tragedy is aimed at the heart, comedy at the fancy. We are too deeply engaged at the one; but at the other, the imagination is at eaſe to obſerve trifles. This would be a great ſource of applauſe to the comic actor, while the tragic, tho' approved, paſſed unregarded. The applauſe at a comedy is more violent, but at a tragedy it is more felt. There is this other great diſproportion alſo between the attempts, that in tragedy the leaſt faults are ſhocking, and in comedy very great ones often have the effect of beauties; players very celebrated in this way, have ſometimes owed a great part of their reputation to hem.

It is evident therefore that more talents and a better underſtanding are neceſſary to the player in tragedy than in comedy; and if we examine the characters of thoſe who have ſucceeded in each way, we ſhall find that this great requiſite to the player has been poſſeſſed in general among them in that proportion.

CHAP. III.

Concerning Senſibility, and the proportion of it neceſſary to different actors.

AN underſtanding has been eſtabliſhed as the firſt requiſite to the qualifying a man for the ſtage. The ſecond is certainly ſenſibility. A diſpoſition to be affected by the paſſions which plays are intended to excite.

There are certain qualities which are neceſſary to a player, as a player, no matter in what character; and there are others which are requiſite only to ſuch as play in ſome one particular manner. Of the general requiſites it is moſt natural to treat firſt, as they lead to the others; and of

theſe the two capital are underſtanding and ſenſibility.

The buſineſs of a dramatic writer is to excite the paſſions, and that of the player is to repreſent in the moſt forcible manner what the other has written. In order to do this, he muſt firſt comprehend perfectly what the author means; for unleſs he conceive, it is impoſſible he ſhould expreſs it. This is the buſineſs of an underſtanding. After this he is to feel the paſſions ſtrongly, which he is to aſſiſt the author in exciting; and this is the work of ſenſibility. It has been ſaid, that whatever paſſion we would raiſe by our diſcourſe in others, we muſt firſt feel ourſelves; if we would enrage and inflame them, we muſt be our ſelves violent and warm; this was the art by which the Greek orator bore down all things before him: in the ſame manner to excite grief in others, it is notorious that we muſt ſhew the ſigns of it in ourſelves.

The diſpoſition to receive thoſe impreſſions by which our own paſſions are affected, is this quality of ſenſibility; and it is evident that ſome men poſſeſs this in greater, ſome in a leſſer degree, and ſome ſcarce at all.

When ever the actor poſſeſſes this, it is ſure to be perceived by the audience, whether it be in tragedy or comedy that he exerts it: for theſe are the ſtrokes of nature's pencil; and they are diſtinguiſhed by all. A great underſtanding is not neceſſary to this ſenſibility; nor is great diſcernment requiſite to the perceiving it. There is a kind of univerſal conſent by which this is perceived and acknowledged among mankind; and it always, unleſs ſtrangely out of place, or monſtrouſly extravagant, is applauded, where-ever it is ſeen. Altho' it may diſcloſe itſelf effectually in either kind of playing; yet it is in tragedy that we ſee it moſt frequently, and moſt advantageouſly: but its moſt happy ſeat is in that kind of theatrical repreſentation which is between the two: that which, without the levity of comedy, is not tied down to the meaſure, or engaged to the ſounding phraſe of tragedy. The reaſon is very plain; it is an emotion of nature, and theſe paſſages are the moſt natural.

The French have whole plays written in this ſtyle, they call it, Comedie l'armoiant; the Romans had the judgment to be fond of it: we only meet with ſtrokes of it accidentally in comedies, but it always affects

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My ever-lov'd, my lord, my maſter,

are of this kind; but beyond them all is the behaviour of the ſame Indiana at her firſt knowing her father. We are ſo happy to ſee theſe ſeveral paſſages played by one who has more of this ſenſibility, than perhaps any other perſon ever poſſeſſed; and there is nothing in which ſhe receives an applauſe ſo univerſal, or that comes ſo truly from the heart. Mrs. Gregory alſo in Hermione ſhews it greatly.

It has been ſuppoſed by ſome, that this ſenſibility depended upon the underſtanding; and that the degree of the one was always proportioned to that of the other; but nothing can be a greater error. We find people of both ſexes who have excellent underſtandings, and who have very little of this ſenſibility. Nay, perhaps, the greateſt underſtandings of all are moſt exempt from it. It is in reality, no other than giving way to the paſſions; and philoſophy would teach us to get the better

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of it; or, at leaſt, to diſguiſe the ſenſation. The ſoft paſſions are concerned in it in the greateſt degree; and we know the weakeſt minds are often the moſt affected by theſe. But what we wiſh in the compleat player, is this great ſenſibility joined with a great underſtanding; nay, and dependant on it, we wiſh him to comprehend, the moſt perfectly imaginable, what is intended by the author; and from this conception we wiſh him to derive that ſenſibility, thro' which it is to be conveyed to us. If he have only the common feeling of weak minds, he will be affected more than he ought, and inſtead of moving us, will render himſelf contemptible; but if he has what is proportioned to the paſſion marked in the place, and intended to be raiſed by the author, then his ſenſibility being derived from his apprehenſion, is proportioned to his underſtanding; and, feeling juſt as much as he ought, he makes us feel juſt as much as we wiſh.

Longinus, in his treatiſe of the *ſublime*, cenſures Cecilius, who had written on the ſame ſubject before him, for having omitted to ſpeak of the *pathetic*, (as he conceives,) ſuppoſing it to be a neceſſary part of the ſublime, naturally ariſing from it, or neceſſarily connected with it. In the ſame

manner we may except againſt thoſe who ſuppoſe ſenſibility to have this natural or neceſſary connection with the underſtanding. The ſublime in writing may indeed be compared to that dignity of manner which we ſee in ſome of the eminent actors in tragedy; and the pathetic to that ſenſibility by which others are diſtinguiſhed: and they are ſo far from being naturally allied, that thoſe who poſſeſs moſt of the one, are in general deficient in the others. It is owing to this, that ſome actors are peculiarly adapted to a certain ſet of characters, and ſome others to others. But as the ſame judicious writer obſerves, that nothing contributes more to the beauty of the ſublime, than a ſtroke of the pathetic beautifully thrown in; ſo there is nothing that ſo happily becomes the dignity of a tragic character, as ſome ſudden ſtroke which confeſſes that he is at once, and, as it were, unexpectedly, affected by a juſt and reaſonable paſſion. This ſenſibility, and that dignity which characteriſes an underſtanding equal to the higheſt parts of tragedy, beautifully ſet off one another.

We are not to wonder that players enjoy this quality in different degrees, for we ſee men of every rank and profeſſion differently affected by the ſame paſſion, as raiſ-

ed by the ſame words; and even as enforced and animated by the ſame action. If one looks into the pit, the place where moſt judgment reſides, and moſt attention is paid to a play, we ſhall ſee different people affected by the ſame ſentence in a very various degree; and this not in proportion to their underſtandings. Of two players nearly equal in that reſpect, one ſhall read, unmoved, the ſame paſſage which ſhall affect the other ſo ſtrongly, that he feels ſo much, that he ſhall be unable to give utterance to the words. Tears ſhall interrupt the delivery, and his whole frame ſhall be ſo diſturbed, that he ſhall not be able to pronounce the words articulately. What we ſhould wiſh in the perfect player is, that he have all the ſenſibility of this laſt, and yet all the command of himſelf that is neceſſary to regulate its emotions. We would not have him feel in ſuch a manner as to loſe the uſe of his voice; but while he conveys to us diſtinctly the words of his author, let him convince us alſo by his manner, that he is affected by them. Here is the great perfection of the ſcience: we would have him, while he feels all this, yet command his paſſions, ſo that they do not diſturb his utterance; and yet we would not have that expreſſion

preſſion he keeps for himſelf take away the pain of it from us; we would have his manner of pronouncing the words take all that effect upon us, which the paſſage has on the moſt ſenſible reader; but we would not have it take that effect on himſelf.

There is nothing in the way of a player's art that takes more effect, perhaps nothing that takes ſo much, as this due regulated ſenſibility. Dignity we admire greatly, and we are right to admire it; for in tragedy nothing is ſo often required: but we admire this ſenſibility when it is kept in due bounds, and yet manifeſts itſelf ſtrongly, more than that. They are two things quite diſtinct from one another; and he may ſucceed excellently in the one, who has no power in the other. The ſeveral parts of the ſame character often require both; and we accordingly ſee one player beſt in one part of it, and another in another. This is not wonderful; for there are paſſages that are full of dignity, and yet have nothing to do with paſſion; and there are places where the ſenſibility of an actor may manifeſt itſelf, that have nothing of dignity; yet without it they have ſomething in them greater. They take more hold upon the heart, and carry us, as it were, out of

ourſelves. We admire dignity, but we take part in this; and where properly exerted, there is an enthuſiaſm and glorious command about it that carries us out of our reaſon.

It has been obſerved, that tho' it is very happy for the player to poſſeſs this quality of ſenſibility, it is neceſſary for him to have that command of himſelf, that he can keep in from interrupting his utterance, or taking away the articulation of his voice: but there are paſſages in which it may be allowed even this effect; and inſtead of a blemiſh it will communicate the greateſt beauty. Thus we ſee in the character of Romeo a ſcene of diſtreſs, to which no other can be equal: his wife, on whoſe ſuppos'd death he had ſwallowed poiſon, revived, and himſelf dying of the effect of that poiſon; and we ſee, as Mr. Barry plays it, his ſenſibility getting the better even of his articulation; his grief takes effect upon the organs of his voice, and the very tone of it is altered: it is broken, hoarſe, and indiſtinct. We give the applauſe to this conſummate piece of playing that it deſerves: we ſee nature triumphing over what art would direct, and we give it a praiſe which art without

out this ſtrong appearance of nature never could deſerve.

It is not to be underſtood that the poiſon has an effect in this, nor is the action to be reduced to the imaginary mechanical power of the medicine; it is the genuine effect of grief: and the actor ſhews that it is ſo by introducing the ſame thing in ſome other paſſages of moſt intereſting ſcenes; but this, tho' highly beautiful, muſt be executed ſparingly; and he has the judgment to know it. Strokes of this kind in playing are like figures in oratory, a few of them enliven, elevate, and give an unconquerable power to a diſcourſe; but to be eternally introducing them, robs them of all their merit and force: for the one, as well as the other, by this frequency, will be found to be the reſult of art and conſideration, not of nature and ſenſibility.

People who feel the moſt from reading a paſſionate ſpeech in a play, are not always thoſe who underſtand it moſt perfectly; this being the effect of ſenſibility, a peculiar quality of the mind, not always, as already obſerved, proportioned to the underſtanding. Either of theſe alone therefore will not do for the player; and as it is plain he may poſſeſs one without the other. We are to acknow-

ledge the pretenſions of that actor great indeed, who has both in ſuch a degree, that while the judgment regulates the ſenſibility, the ſenſibility animates, enlivens, and inſpires the underſtanding.

Among the players, thoſe of a tender diſpoſition ſuppoſe themſelves formed for tragedy, and thoſe naturally ſprightly for comedy. 'Tis true they are ſo far formed for each of theſe ways of playing; but this is very far from being of that importance they imagine. At the utmoſt it is only a part of this great qualification ſenſibility, which in all its excellence is but the ſecond, not the firſt: much leſs the only qualification of the player. People may be tender and fooliſh, and they may be gay and fooliſh: and with this addition, neither one nor the other will be of any uſe.

Indeed any peculiar turn of mind which is only a partial ſenſibility, is rather an hindrance than an advantage to him who would excel as an actor; the man who has ſo much ſenſibility, as being of a gay temper, to feel ſprightly paſſages; or ſo much, as being of a ſoft and tender diſpoſition, to feel the diſtreſſes of love, and the other gentle paſſions, may be, by that, qualified for certain parts; but he who would make the compleat player, ſhould be of equal

equal ſenſibility, whatever be the paſſion; his heart ſhould be ſuſceptible of all emotions, and of all equally; he ſhould be able to expreſs all, as well as to feel all in the ſame force; and to make them ſucceed to one another ever ſo quickly; for there are characters which require this. His heart ſhould be ſuſceptible of all; and ſhould indeed poſſeſs neither prevalently in itſelf. It ſhould be as the ſhapeleſs wax pliable, and in the hand of the artiſt, ready to be moulded at his pleaſure into a Richard or an Horatio, a Caſtalio or a Zanga.

Such characters there have been among the players, and ſuch there are, tho' perhaps in not ſo conſummate a perfection. Kynaſton, among the old actors, ſeems to have arrived at this perfect character; for being in his own diſpoſition neither fiery nor melancholy, neither proud nor mean, he equally received from the words of his part, one or other of theſe paſſions; and his heart, pliable equally either way, felt as the author directed it. His part for the night, or for the preſent moment, was as the inſpiring ſoul animating his yielding body: and ſeeming to have no paſſions of his own, he adopted all that were given him; it was therefore Kynaſton was in all

his parts leſs the actor and more the man than any who had gone before him.

We have at this time a very ſhining inſtance of the ſame kind, in Mrs. Pritchard. Mrs. Cibber's naturally plaintive voice and melancholly tone, which qualify her ſo happily for ſome parts, making her leſs natural in others; for they will break in at times, altho' her judgment in characters, where they are not required, takes ſo much pains to baniſh them. Mr. Garrick, in the ſame manner would command all this praiſe of perfect ſenſibility, were it not that he had too much ſpirit, and Mr. Barry but that he has too much ſoftneſs.

The ordinary reader will underſtand this ſufficiently, if he recollects, that whether we ſee Mr. Garrick in Richard or in Oſmyn, ſtill he ſees Mr. Garrick; that Mr. Barry in Othello, or in Jaffeir, ſtill ſhews himſelf Mr. Barry; and that Mrs. Cibber, is plainly Mrs. Cibber, whether ſhe act Alicia or Indiana: but when Mrs. Pritchard plays Merope, ſhe is Merope; when ſhe repreſents the wife of Theſeus, ſhe is the wife of Theſeus, and nothing of her ſelf appears, but all the character.

The ſpirit of Mr. Garrick, the ſoftneſs of Mr. Barry, and the melancholy of Mrs. Cibber, attend them in whatever part they

they play; but Mrs. Pritchard, having no diſtinguiſhing mark of this kind, carries with her nothing that is peculiar to herſelf into the character; it would be better if the other three would ſhake off what is ſo peculiar in each of them, beautiful as it is: for tho' by means of it, they ſeverally ſhine in certain characters, yet it renders them leſs fit for univerſal playing: and in this we ſee the ſtrongeſt inſtance imaginable, that any peculiar turn of mind, far from qualifying a perſon for playing, is rather a diſadvantage.

This ductility of mind, to continue the alluſion, is the only true, as it is the only general ſenſibility. It were beſt that the heart of the player had no reigning paſſion of its own with this ready ſenſibility of all. Then he would receive them all as the writer offered them, in an eaſy and unconſtrained ſucceſſion. He would be the body, the author for the time the ſoul: And thus he would repreſent all well, becauſe he would firſt feel all properly. Few enjoy this ſenſibility perfect; all are excellent, very nearly in proportion to the degree in which they enjoy it: and it is like the underſtanding, one of theſe qualifications the player muſt have from nature; for art will never give it.

This

The ſucceſſion of the paſſions to one another, which this general ſenſibility alone can qualify the player to expreſs, is ſuppoſed moſt frequent in tragedy; but it is only more obvious there: it is indeed more common in comedy, tho' leſs ſeen.

All that is repreſented in tragedy is to be great, the paſſions capable of producing theſe great things are only few; theſe therefore are all thoſe into which tragedy will want to carry the performer; and if he have a diſpoſition to be affected by theſe, no more will be required of him. Tragedy is, in this reſpect, confined to narrower bounds than people unaccuſtomed to examine things might imagine; its great reſources are only three, love, revenge, and ambition: and conſequently the principal characters it gives us, are tender lovers, generous avengers of injuries, or glorious criminals, who tread laws, juſtice, and all things ſacred under foot, to riſe to greatneſs. The affection of a mother has ſometimes been employed as the principal reſource, and ſometimes that of a wife. The firſt has always ſucceeded well, but not the other: Perhaps becauſe the latter is not quite ſo natural. Even a Belvidera pleaſes leſs than an Andromache. For the

the reſt, when we have ſeen a Romeo, a Zanga, and a Richard, we have the principal traces of all that the tragic writers propoſe to give us.

When Mrs. Cibber repreſents the widow of Hector, the moſt brutal and unfeeling of the audience never refuſe the true applauſe of tears, while ſhe pronounces that natural and eloquent ſtrain of ſorrow:

—— grief interrupts my ſpeech.
My ſoul o'erflows with fondneſs;--- let him know
I dy'd to ſave him.

For here that happy actreſs is in her true way; the melancholy and plaintive turn of her mind helps her in expreſſing the affliction, and none other could ſo well have executed it; but in the very next line,

Seaſon his mind with early hints of glory.

there is a fire and feeling of a more exalted kind, mingling itſelf with the grief: and in this the ſame natural turn of mind, which before aſſiſted her ſo happily, prevents her from equalling our own ſenſations.

This

This is one of thoſe inſtances in which paſſions of a very different kind ſucceed momentarily to one another. The affection of the mother prevailed in the two firſt lines, the glory of the wife of Hector, and the expectations the world would have from the ſon of that hero in the third. Here was required that ductility of heart, that proneneſs to be affected, and that readineſs to receive any ſenſations ever ſo different; in ſhort, that general ſenſibility, before diſtinguiſhed from the particular. Without this no actreſs could give the true force to both theſe paſſions, ſo ſuddenly ſucceeding one another; and we ſee by this the miſtake of ſuppoſing any peculiarity of diſpoſition could be of advantage to the player; ſince we ſee that the complaining manner of Mrs. Cibber, tho' ſuited to the character of Andromache, as much as any manner could be to any character, yet makes her loſe, at leaſt, as much on one hand, as ſhe gains by it on the other; and if this be the caſe in a particular character, much more muſt it be ſo in that variety of characters which a capital performer is expected to repreſent.

In conſidering farther, to what particular ſet of actors this general ſenſibility is moſt neceſſary, we ſhall find that comedy moſt

moſt demands it. The paſſions which have concern in tragedy are not only few, but they have ſome degree of connection with one another; they are all great and grave. Thus the grief of Andromache, and the ſenſe of glory in the ſame character, are, tho' ſo different, that the immediate tranſition is difficult, as we ſee, to a good actreſs, yet both grave and great. Among the heroes of tragedy rage or grief are the two great paſſions; they are lamenting or meditating revenge: theſe are as much connected as the others, being both great, and both natural to heroic minds; yet we find the tranſitions from them, in both, equally difficult. In thoſe characters where rage prevails, Mr. Garrick, who is as naturally violent as Mrs. Cibber is melancholy, finds it very difficult to make the tranſition from anger to ſorrow, as may be ſeen in ſeveral parts of Jaffeir: and in the ſame manner, Mr. Barry, whoſe natural tendency is to elegant diſtreſs, finds it as hard to paſs from that to anger in ſome parts of the ſame character. It is therefore theſe players ſucceed ſo happily in different parts of the ſame character in that play, that no body will ever be able to ſay, with juſtice, which of them performs it beſt: it is for the ſame reaſon,

reaſon, that in parts where violence and fury are the great characteriſtics, Mr. Garrick ſucceeds beſt, and Mr. Barry in theſe diſtinguiſhed by tenderneſs; and in the character of Romeo, where there is a great deal of both, they are both ſo amazingly eminent: if, upon the whole, we ſee Mr. Barry with the greateſt pleaſure, it is not becauſe Mr. Garrick is the inferior actor, but becauſe Romeo is more diſtinguiſhed by love than rage.

Now, altho' theſe paſſions are different, yet they are, as already obſerved, few in number, and in ſome degree, allied to one another. On the contrary, the comic player, to whom ſenſibility has been ſuppoſed leſs eſſential, has within his province the whole number of them. All that can affect the human heart come within his buſineſs, and his tranſitions are expected to be more ſudden and more perfect than even thoſe in tragedy. Love, hatred, and ambition, come within his compaſs as much as in the others; for tho' differently expreſſed, they are as common in comic as in tragic writing; and with theſe an almoſt infinite number of other paſſions, and of modes of the paſſions which form ſubdiviſions altogether innumerable.

He

He is to expreſs the extacy of a fooliſh joy, the pangs of the moſt tormenting uneaſineſs, the dotage of the old lover, the inſolence of the young one, the ſuſpicions of a jealous huſband, the reſentment of an inſulted rival, the noble diſtreſs of a generous mind, and the mean timidity of a poor one. Sometimes it will fall to his ſhare to ſhew us a ſtupid admiration, and ſometimes an inſolent diſdain, ſometimes an open generoſity of diſpoſition, ſometimes a mean ſelf love; and he is to expreſs every one of theſe under that infinite variety of favourable or unfavourable circumſtances, under the direction of which they become, as it were, quite different paſſions. Every paſſion, every emotion, by which the human heart can be affected, fall within the compaſs of the comic player; how univerſal therefore ought to be his ſenſibility?

The being ſuſceptible of the proper impreſſions from each of theſe paſſions, is one great part of the comic player's qualification; but he poſſeſſes this in vain, if he poſſeſſes it ſingly; with the power of feeling, he muſt have the power of quitting them inſtantaneouſly, or of changing one for another, or all his ſenſibility is nothing.

The

The author often preſcribes very quick tranſitions, but he muſt be able to anticipate him in this, and to throw himſelf from one to another of them, with not only rapidity but eaſe. The feeling the paſſions is one great qualification in the comic player; and this tranſition is another, equal, or very near equal to it in merit, and altogether as neceſſary.

Thoſe actors who have been applauded for their variety, have excelled in this particular; for people do not always know what it is they praiſe, or on what foundation. This was the ſource of all that applauſe paid to Leigh among the old players; an actor famous, not only for the great number of different characters he acted well, but for that uncommon eaſe with which he acted all of them: and by the judicious, moſt of all, for that perfect change of manner, voice, addreſs, and almoſt perſon itſelf, with which he played the different parts often of the ſame character. The judicious of that time, perhaps leſs judicious than the better part of ours, often were ready to accuſe the author as not having kept up a ſameneſs of character in the ſame perſon; but this was only when Leigh played them. Perhaps the exceſs of his variety tended toward

ward a fault, and that was his eſcape, which was attributed to the writer. But tho' a high, they ſay he was a juſt player, often bold and flighty, but never quite out of nature. His excellence in a variety of different characters was owing to the ſame ſource with his amazing variety in the ſame, when the poet admitted of it; and that perfect ſenſibility he poſſeſſed, which rendered him capable of almoſt any character, as ſuſceptible of almoſt any paſſion, was happily accompanied with this readineſs of change, this eaſy tranſition from one paſſion to another in the ſame character.

In the ſame manner our Mr. Garrick, in comedy, runs from one paſſion into another, with a conſummate eaſe: and with all the advantages that made Leigh conſpicuous, he has no tincture of his fault: for he is never even ſeemingly out of nature. We ſee this happy art of tranſition from paſſion to paſſion in Archer, which tho' far from one of his beſt characters; yet gives him an opportunity of exerting this quality, more than many of which he is more fond, and in which the audience is more fond of him. He is in this, one perſon with Cherry, another with Scrub, a third with Boniface, a fourth with Mrs. Sullen, and

and with Aimwell two diſtinct perſons beſide; one, when alone with him, another, when any other is preſent. And in every one of the ſcenes in which he is concerned with either of theſe, there are opportunities of exerting this happineſs he poſſeſſes of tranſition from paſſion to paſſion, and he is equal to them all.

The author has given vaſt opportunities to the player in this particular character to ſhine by this peculiar advantage; and Mr. Garrick muſt be allowed to overlook none of them. It was to this opportunity of exerting a various ſenſibility and ready change that Mr. Wilks owed the great praiſe he obtained in this part; and if it became more conſiderable in itſelf as Mr. Wilks play'd it, than as Mr. Garrick does, the only reaſon was, that Mr. Wilks threw into it the eaſe and addreſs of the gentleman: a character which he perfectly came up to; and which, (not to make the deficience reflect upon Mr. Garrick,) we entirely want at this time on the ſtage.

Mr. Garrick makes the gentleman ſhine thro' the whole deportment of the pretended footman, I doubt not, as well as Mr. Wilks ever did; but then that gentleman which ſo ſhines thro' it, ſeems to be of another

another kind from that which the other actor uſed to diſplay. I ſhould be ſorry to allow to Mr. Wilks, or any man whatever, the character of a perſon better cut out, by nature for the ſtage than Mr. Garrick, and his poſſeſſing this amiable quality in a ſuperior degree; or, in more proper terms, his poſſeſſing it, and Mr. Garrick's not poſſeſſing it, (for no man can be a gentleman by halves) muſt have been owing to accident. Mr. Wilks was admitted into better company, or he was treated more like an equal in it: for that diſtant civility which I have ſeen this perſon practiſe, when in ſuch company, and which I ſuppoſe is expected of him, does him more harm than the company itſelf can do him good: while he has the example, he is teaching himſelf not to imitate it, but to play the part of an inferior. It may be in part owing to this, that Mr. Garrick, in particular, is not ſufficiently, or indeed, is not at all truly the gentleman upon the ſtage: but there is alſo, I am afraid, a general reaſon, why neither he, nor any one elſe is ſo: the players are copiers of nature, and we have few originals. We can, in many things, conceive what we cannot execute; and in the ſame manner, we can imagine what we do not ſee. Thus we retain in our minds the idea

of

of a gentleman's behaviour; and we wonder, that we do not ſee it on the ſtage, forgetting that it is not in the world.

While the ſuperiority muſt be allowed to Mr. Wilks in this circumſtance, we muſt own that it is impoſſible to excel Mr. Garrick, in the laſt act, in particular, of this play, in his beautiful, ready, and natural tranſitions, from the congratulation with his friend on their ſucceſs, to his accuſations of him on his confeſſion; from his deſpair ariſing from one circumſtance, to his tranſport at another; his dread of his old friend's appearance, whom he expects to laugh at him, to his welcoming him as the meſſenger of good news. Theſe, and ſeveral other paſſages of the laſt act of the Stratagem, afford opportunities for an actor, who poſſeſſes, with a general ſenſibility, an happy power of tranſition from paſſion to paſſion; to ſhew himſelf either in the moſt perfect light; and all theſe Mr. Garrick improves in ſuch a manner, that while we ſet him beneath the famed Mr. Wilks in that ſingle circumſtance juſt mentioned, we muſt be allowed to believe, that in all the reſt, he excelled him in this, which was his favourite character.

As the French comic writers are bolder than ours in their tranſitions, a bolder uſe of them is expected in their players; and indeed theſe, with the audience, all breathing the ſame air with the poet, and ſeeming to imbibe from it the ſame condition of mind, the one are ready to make all the tranſitions as quick as the poet to expect them, and the other are as ready to receive them.

An Engliſhman is at firſt ſurprized at the French comedians, and it is principally from theſe bold and violent tranſitions; but he becomes accuſtomed to their manner after a few nights, and ſoon after he admires them. However violent theſe changes are, the actor, if he be a good one, performs them with the moſt perfect unconcern, and they appear natural in his action, even tho' in themſelves they ſeem out of nature; ſo much is an excellent actor able to do toward reconciling even improbabilities.

Their principal comedian, at this time, has this happineſs of tranſition from paſſion to paſſion, for his principal excellence; tho' a Frenchman, he has leſs action than any of the Engliſh players: He will ſtand in his place upon the ſtage, with his arms genteely diſpoſed, and without once ſtir-

ing hand or foot, go thro' a ſcene of the greateſt variety. He will, in this ſingle poſture expreſs to his audience all the changes of paſſion that can affect an human heart; and he will expreſs them ſtrongly: So that toſſing about of the arms, and ſtrutting from ſide to ſide of the ſtage, is not the buſineſs. The great ſecret of croſſing and croſſing is an Engliſh art; and if our players would a little more attend to the excellencies of their neighbours, they would improve by letting alone this as well as many other of their ſuppoſed excellencies. It has the appearance of an odd leſſon to bid the Engliſh players obſerve the French, in order to moderate their action; but the man was not quite in the wrong who had his daughter taught to dance, that ſhe might learn how to ſtand ſtill.

The French have many of them extravagancies enough in their playing, but the beſt of them depend upon the expreſſion of their countenance, and tone of their voice, more than upon thoſe expanſions of the arms we are ſo fond of, for the deſcribing their ſeveral paſſions. They had rather grief ſhould be read upon their cheek, love in their eye, and rage upon the forehead, than that they ſhould all be expreſſed

expreſſed by the ſame violent action, which is in reality expreſſive of none of them; and which our people accordingly uſe for one as well as the other. The motion of the arms has very little to do with the grace of a good deportment; and it is by this, and by the countenance, that the French, who greatly excel the Engliſh in general, in theſe tranſitions, principally expreſs them.

Senſibility is the ground of all this tranſition; for he who does not feel both the paſſions, can never make this change properly from the one to the other of them. Theſe tranſitions are more frequent, and more various in comedy, than in tragedy; therefore ſenſibility, far from being leſs, is more neceſſary to the comic than to the tragic actor. By the term ſenſibility, people are too apt to conceive nothing but a feeling for the tender and melancholy paſſions; but it is applicable to all. The difference between the comic and the tragic player in this reſpect, is, that the firſt muſt have a more general, and the other a more powerful ſenſibility. The comedian is expected to feel more paſſions than the tragedian, but the tragedian muſt feel them the more ſtrongly.

The ſenſibility of the tragedian, tho' leſs various, muſt be capable of producing greater effects than that of the comedian. In fine, it muſt be adapted to the condition of each. The comedian muſt feel like a common man, and muſt feel every thing; the tragedian muſt give place but to a few paſſions; but what he receives he muſt feel like an hero.

The part of the tragedian is nevertheleſs more difficult than that of the other, becauſe the few things he is to repreſent are all great; but he has this advantage, that if it be difficult for him to ſucceed, it is alſo difficult for us judge of him. The comedian acts in common life; and to know whether he repreſents his character naturally, we only ſuppoſe ourſelves in its place; but the original in the tragic ſcene is ſomething beyond our immediate acquaintance; and the player may commit many a fault, if it be but a noiſy one, which the greateſt part of the audience ſhall take for a beauty.

It will be natural to ſet up the common arts of women in private life, againſt this general neceſſity of feeling upon the ſtage. If an actreſs, it will be ſaid, can feign a paſſion for the man who ſupports her, of which ſhe feels nothing, why cannot ſhe

diſſemble

diſſemble with us as well upon the ſtage? Certainly there are ſome who do this in private; and why may not they deceive a diſintereſted audience, who can impoſe upon the man that devotes his life and fortune to them? For that reaſon, becauſe an audience is diſintereſted. The lover is deſirous to believe the lady is fond of him; and therefore he is eaſily made to receive the pretence of ſuch a fondneſs: but an audience are unbiaſſed; they look with eyes of impartiality; they will not allow what does not exiſt; and will exclaim againſt that pretence for robbing them of their ſhillings, which the lover would receive as the price of his whole fortune. The lover is willing, and the audience are alſo willing to be deluded; but when the paſſion of the one makes every thing paſs upon him, the others, having their eyes open, expect ſome colour or reſemblance in what they are to receive for the preſent as a reality.

Now, tho' ſenſibility, the neceſſity of which to the player of every kind has been ſo abundantly ſhewn, be a quality which he is to owe to nature, yet are not rules and art in the managing it unneceſſary? If theſe be capable of improving even the underſtanding, nature's firſt gift to the

player, much more is it worth his while to attend to them, with reſpect to this, which is only the ſecond.

CHAP. IV.

Of the means by which an actor may improve natural ſenſibility.

WITH reſpect to the gifts of nature, the effects of art upon them are the ſame; no art can give them, nor any thing that can ſupply their place; but art may improve them: As it may an underſtanding, ſo certainly it may ſenſibility; nor can there be a more uſeful leſſon to the player, who has natural abilities, than that which ſhall preſcribe the means by which this is to be effected.

In the firſt place then, it is to be obſerved, that tho' ſenſibility ought to be more univerſal in the comedian, it requires to be more perfect in the performer who means to excel in tragedy. Tho' various in the comedian, it is alſo natural and eaſy, ſo that few rules are neceſſary to direct, or little pains to arrive at a perfection in its courſe. On the contrary, the characters of tragedy are raiſed above common nature,

ture, and the paſſions it repreſents are all great. The ſenſibility therefore of the tragedian requires to be regulated; and he ſhould labour to ſupport it. He ſhould increaſe it by indulgence, when the objects are great, and check it in all its ſallies toward ſuch as are leſs; that being prevented from dividing into little channels, the main body may be the ſtronger.

Many who attempt great things often run into extravagance; nor is that in any thing to be guarded againſt, ſo much as in the ſupport and conduct of this ſenſibility. A proper exertion of it gives dignity as well as grace to the leaſt important ſcenes, and an exceſs of it will render the greateſt ridiculous.

Let not the proportion be too great for the event. A man would not gape to ſwallow a pea, nor would any unleſs a *****, beſtow a thouſand pounds upon the portal, when the houſe was not to coſt five hundred. The danger of thoſe who are conſcious of the merit that is in feeling, is, that they ſhould feel too violently; and they never make a worſe figure than when the ſentiment is too mean for the expreſſion.

Nothing is ſo much dreaded by the ſpirited actor, as that he ſhould be accuſed of inſenſibility; and to avoid this Scylla he falls into the Charybdis of extravagant emotion. He eſcapes the quick-ſand, in which if he had ſunk, it would have been without noiſe, to periſh in the whirlpool, in which, after he has been toſſed about, without a wind to breathe upon it, or any evident cauſe of the commotion, he dies ridiculouſly.

There is nothing the player ought to avoid ſo much as affectation; for it is his buſineſs to copy nature: He will always be affected in his ſenſibility, if he accuſtom himſelf to force it upon his audience, where the ſentiment does not require it; and like the writer who becomes contemptible from his eternally labouring to ſay fine things, he will be the martyr to his extravagance in forcing that which has no merit, if it be not natural.

He who would excel in this great article of his profeſſion, muſt firſt ſee that the paſſage he is conſidering requires ſenſibility, and then in what degree it demands the exertion of it; for the proportioning it has the ſame merit with the proportioning loudneſs of voice to paſſion. Where

right,

right, it adds force; but where extravagant, it is ridiculous. The audience enter enough into the ſpirit of the part to know what emotions of this kind are neceſſary. they feel where they ought; and they very reaſonably expect the actor to do the ſame, and only the ſame; they applaud the ſenſibility of the actor when themſelves are touch'd; but nothing is ſo contemptible as the perſon who is full of paſſion, and labouring to expreſs his feeling before a multitude of people who are as good judges of the ſentiment as he is, and remain, as the author deſigned they ſhould, quite unmoved. There are things very great which have nothing to do with paſſion, and there is a way of communicating to theſe all that can be conceived of dignity, but quite free from paſſion. Thoſe deſcriptions we meet with in ſome tragedies, and the very metaphors in others, are often of this kind; the audience expects to be charmed with the delivery of theſe; but as they conceive no other idea reſpecting them but that of magnificence, and are ſenſible the author meant to convey no other, they are offended if the actor gives them the characters of paſſion. Inſtances of this error might

be produced in Merope, but it is not neceſſary to point them out; for the audience always diſtinguiſhes them. I have heard an applauſe from above indeed, attend on ſome of them, but I never ſaw any thing but diſguſt upon the judicious faces in the pit.

Senſibility, ſo uſeful, has ſometimes been the deſtruction of a player; but that ſolely for the want of that addreſs and management which this chapter is intended to inculcate. Among theſe the moſt conſpicuous has been the late Mr. Walker, a man to whom nature had given a graceful perſon, an air of dignity, and a deportment anſwerable. I name not the articles in which ſhe had left him deficient; but his ruin was, that his ſenſibility continually ran away with him; and when he had a paſſion to expreſs that would have moved the audience, the blood was in his face, before the time, his whole perſon was diſordered, and unleſs people knew the part, they could not find out for what; for the vehemence of his feeling took away his utterance. *Vox faucibus hæſit*, and he could not ſpeak articulately.

Mr.

Mr. Berry, of the preſent time, has many good qualities; but he alſo has a ſenſibility that runs away with his reaſon. There happened to his ſhare one character, Adam, in which all this was natural; but in general it offends thro' the exceſs, and ſometimes ſhocks thro' the impropriety.

It is plain from this, and from a number of other inſtances, that things are what they are, from the propriety with which they are employed: And nothing is more certain than that, in the player's profeſſion, the greateſt faults may ariſe from the ſame ſources which would have afforded the greateſt beauties. The beſt things, when perverted, become the worſt; and thoſe things which communicate the greateſt beauty, ſpirit, and grace in playing, where properly introduced, and which, under the due regulations, dignify and embelliſh the action; when they are forced in unnaturally, cover it with defects and blemiſhes; not only ceaſing to be beauties themſelves, but, like the loaded pencil thrown at random upon that canvaſs, where it ought to have heightened ſome excellent figure, they blot out and obliterate ſomething elſe, that perhaps had beauty.

Nature gives ſenſibility to the player, but experience is the great guide to him how he is to uſe it: The diſtinctions in the ſeveral degrees of paſſions, like thoſe among the colours, have no words to expreſs them. But there is ſomething which to the ingenuous and modeſt beginner, may, in ſome degree, ſtand in the place of this, viz. experience: or, remarks made on the reſult of the experience of others. And this is what is offered in theſe obſervations.

CHAP. V.

On the due regulation and proper uſe of Senſibility.

IN order to diſtinguiſh where, and in what degree ſenſibility ſhould be allowed to operate and manifeſt itſelf, we are firſt to diſtinguiſh what is the nature of the ſeveral paſſions. To the vulgar they will appear all to call for it, and all in the ſame degree: But thoſe who are capable of feeling what ſuperior characters are expected to conceive, will determine otherwiſe:

wiſe: and as all are not to be admitted from this conſideration, ſo neither is every kind of expreſſion of thoſe that are. Nothing can be great, which it is greatneſs to deſpiſe. The tragic actor, who has a ſoul formed for great conceptions, will therefore make it a point to be unmoved in ſome affecting circumſtance, even tho' he ſees ſome rival in the ſame part carry away the applauſe by his ſtrong ſenſibility and free expreſſion of it. Mr. Garrick and Mr. Barry both are excellent in Jaffeir; but there are ſome paſſages in which the laſt deſerves all that applauſe which is laviſhed by a miſguided audience upon the other. Jaffeir is the character of an hero and an huſband. Mr. Garrick's natural diſpoſition is to dignity, and Mr. Barry's to tenderneſs; no wonder therefore, that the one is too little, and the other is too much the huſband. Mr. Barry receives a great deal of applauſe for his tenderneſs in ſome paſſages, in which his tenderneſs is a blemiſh; and Mr. Garrick ought to ſatisfy himſelf that he deſerves, tho' he does not receive, that common ſtamp of merit for a contrary deportment. On the other hand, there are paſſages which the author meant to be all tender-

neſs, which nature dictates to make ſo, and which the audience always expects to find ſo expreſſed; in theſe Mr. Garrick is leſs eminent, and the other excels beyond all praiſe. There may be many circumſtances under which it would be natural for the man to be moved; but where the hero diſdains the ſenſibility with a noble reſolution and true greatneſs of ſoul. The audience might have been pleaſed with ſenſibility in this place; but they are tranſported, raviſhed, and raiſed to an enthuſiaſm of praiſe by the diſdain of ſo womaniſh an emotion. Here then is ſomething expreſſed which is greater than ſenſibility, and which often ought to controul it.

Thus an actor may judge wrong with reſpect to the propriety of his giving way to his ſenſibility; and he may alſo err as egregiouſly as to the manner of expreſſing it. As it is to be diſclaimed on ſome occaſions, it is to be regulated in many; a noiſy ſorrow is for little minds; and there are few paſſions of any kind that ought to be permitted to carry a great one to exceſs. The common part of an audience is apt to take exceſſive lamentation for great ſenſibility, or extravagant noiſe for great

great anger; but the blunder is as great in one as the other. The ſound and the ſhew are equally deceitful in themſelves, and equally contemptible to the better part of thoſe who look upon them; theſe expect the dignity, as well as the grief to be within; and they will often be ſatisfied with a very ſlight, ſo it be a proper expreſſion of them. They will meaſure the giant by his foot: And when they ſee the leaſt part great, they will not doubt, but all is in proportion.

There is not a ſingle incident in tragedy, where an actor is ſuppoſed to feel more than Romeo on the news of Juliet's death. Shakeſpear, who well knew all that is here written; for it is but tranſcribed upon the paper from the heart; has put but few words into his mouth on this occaſion. It would have been a fine ſubject for an exclamation to an Otway; or Rowe would have made it introduce ſome nightingale ſimile; but this genius knew better what the heart would, and what it ought to feel. He has put into his mouth only five words; and when we hear Barry pronounce on this occaſion:

Then I defy you ſtars,

we

we are ſatisfied, more would have been impertinent, and below the conſummate degree of ſuch a ſorrow.

The ſame prudent reſerve that the poet has uſed with reſpect to the words, the player obſerves in their delivery. This was too great a grief for noiſy exclamation: We read in his geſture, eyes, countenance, and tone of voice, the moſt perfect deſpair, and ſee him braving even heaven in the defiance; yet it is not bellowed out like the curſe of a Sempronius, but ſtrength is given by the very refuſing loudneſs. Nor is this all; his manner, as he gives utterance to it, is reſolute, but not inſolent in the defiance, or broken by the ſorrow; his ſoul was too great for ſuch weakneſs; for either of theſe were weakneſs. Struck to death he is above raving about it; and he conveys all that terror to the audience which he ſeems to refuſe himſelf. Thus it is in many parts beſide, that this great performer gives new force to the character; for Romeo, whatever ſome may think, and whatever the friar may have ſaid of him in one inſtance, does not throughout betray

The ungovern'd fury of a beaſt.

The

The character is generous, tender, and affectionate. It has extravagancies, but they ariſe from accidents attending on the purſuits of theſe paſſions; and tho' ſometimes overcome by them for a moment, for that is the great art of the poet, it is in general great enough to conquer them.

I have thought, that all who have played it hitherto have erred in ſome paſſages, from their not conceiving ſufficiently the dignity of the character. In particular, where he is about to ſwallow the poiſon, and ſays, at the tomb of his dead wife he will

Set up his everlaſting reſt,
And ſhake the yoke of inauſpicious ſtars
From this world-weary fleſh,

the ſentiment was not intended to be conveyed with noiſe or vehemence; for that makes death a thing of conſequence to him, which certainly to a perſon of his greatneſs of ſoul, and overwhelmed with his ſorrows, it was not.

A perſon that is about to die by his own act, muſt certainly feel a great deal as he prepares for the execution, but the greater the character, and the deeper the affliction,

on, the leſs will he permit his mind to be diſturbed by it. It might appear a terrible thing to Mr. Garrick or Mr. Barry to ſwallow poiſon, and they might be ſtrangely diſturbed at the doing of it; but it could not be ſuch to Romeo in ſuch circumſtances. Here is one of thoſe inſtances in which the judgment is to regulate and moderate ſenſibility: Suppreſſing what would naturally ariſe from the ſubject, by appropriating it to the character.

As there are occaſions in which a natural and real ſenſibility is faulty, and is not to be indulged; and as the moſt judicious do accordingly cenſure the actor who gives way to it; ſo nothing is more common than the exerting of a feigned ſenſibility where the actor feels nothing; and this never fails to be treated, by thoſe who are capable of diſcerning the fraud, with the greateſt contempt.

Some player ſees another violently moved at a certain paſſage, and when he acts the ſame character he takes care to be moved, or at leaſt pretends to be moved, as violently. Perhaps he copies exactly what he had obſerved of the action, delivery and geſture of the other; and there are always a part of an audience as ready

to

to take the appearance for the reality, as he is to give it: but with the better ſort it is otherwiſe: they ſee that it is ſemblance of worth, not ſubſtance, and deſpiſe him; for among all the ſervile herd of imitators, none are ſo contemptible as thoſe who would paſs upon us a copy for an original, when the affections of the heart are concerned.

There is not any thing creates tranſport in the obſerver ſo ſtrongly, as a ſtroke of paſſion properly felt by the tragedian, and ſtrongly but not extravagantly expreſſed. We entertain the very ſentiments, which we admire, as we ſee them ſo beautifully deſcribed to us, we put ourſelves in the place, not only of the player, but of the poet, and of the perſon celebrated, ſuppoſing for the moment, that we, in ſome manner, are doing all that we ſo admire; or ſetting aſide the player and the poet, we repreſent to ourſelves the hero, and adopt his paſſions, and conceive that we are acting what we applaud. There is this effect in real dignity of ſentiment, that when properly conveyed to us, it fills us with a pleaſure, and a certain noble pride, as if ourſelves were acting as we ſee thoſe act whom we applaud.

All

All this the heart, which has in itſelf greatneſs and ſenſibility, feels, when a great character, drawn by an able poet, is repreſented before it, by an actor who has this glorious ſenſibility. On the contrary, where all is affectation, imitation, and pretence, none is concerned or moved; what the actor himſelf does not feel, he will never make the audience feel, tho' he copy ever ſo perfectly the beſt player who ever pronounced a ſentence. We ſee it is a mechanical exhibition in which nature has no part; and feeling nothing, we know he feels nothing, and condemn him for the want of the greateſt article in his profeſſion: While ſome applaud a ſtroke like this, for there are as bad judges of acting as there can be actors, we ſhall ſee the greater part unaffected or diſguſted: This may ſerve as a proof, that the ſenſibility is only affected; for when real, it touches every body. When the player exerts this quality as he ought, in ſome paſſage that requires it, all join in the applauſe; for there is none who is not affected. This is the great happineſs of the player who has true ſenſibility, and by this we may judge of him, if we are diffident of our own apprehenſions; for that which

which affects every body, the wiſe and the ignorant, is aſſuredly the effect of nature, and there is nothing that does it like the juſt exertion of this quality.

It has been allowed that ſenſibility cannot be acquired any more than an underſtanding; but that is no reaſon for ſuppoſing that it cannot be improved. We ſay people are born poets, or they never can be made ſuch; but we do not mean by this, that they will, from mere nature, write good verſes. The genius, the underſtanding require to be cultivated, and they are always improved by it; and it is the ſame with ſenſibility.

Now tho' that ſenſibility neceſſary to the tragedian, (for it is of that we are ſpeaking, what regards the comic actor has been explained already) cannot be acquired, it may be thus cultivated. When little in itſelf it may be enlarged, and when exuberant, which is not unfrequently the caſe, it may be regulated and reduced to order, without which its exceſs is as hurtful as a deficiency, as has been obſerved already.

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a due degree of it be had from nature; but this is not the caſe with the player in tragedy. There is a ſenſibility which is low and mean, and this will require to be exalted. Indeed no man can act a hero perfectly who has not in himſelf the ſeeds of an heroic diſpoſition: and when the actor finds himſelf poſſeſſed of this quality, but finds it too low in its nature, he is to exalt and ennoble it by accuſtoming himſelf to great thoughts, and by keeping his mind poſſeſſed by great and noble ſentiments. A man who is honeſt, may act a villain; or one who has the principles of the gentleman about him, may play the peaſant or the ſervant, becauſe this is only condeſcending to ſomething that is worſe than himſelf, or below himſelf, but to act an hero requires his riſing to ſomething greater: This is not in their power, unleſs nature have done ſomething towards it. A man may make a player of any other kind, be his natural turn of mind what it will; but it is impoſſible that he who is of a mean, timid, or grovelling diſpoſition, ſhould ever repreſent a great character juſtly. All his own ideas will be low, ſervile, and mean, and they will at one time or other communicate themſelves

ſelves to the part, and ſhew that the reſt is but aſſumed and copied.

Greatneſs of mind is then one part of that ſenſibility which is to qualify the actor for ſhining in the ſuperior characters of tragedy. Beſide and beyond all that the poet can ſet down in the part, there is a dignity of manner, which muſt be owing to the feeling, and which none can aſſume who does not feel properly, that is, greatly.

We do not ſuppoſe a player born with ſo much of this, or poſſeſſed of ſo much of it at any time of his life, as would be neceſſary to conſtitute an hero; but there is a portion of it required.

A part of this may, nay, and muſt have been born with him. What it is farther, he muſt have made it by management and ſtudy. The accuſtoming himſelf to great and noble ſentiments is one great method of attaining that perfection in ſenſibility, the rudiments of which only can be had from nature. The reading attentively and deliberately alone, and abſtracted from all other thoughts, the greateſt paſſages in thoſe authors, who have ſucceeded moſt in heroic poetry. It is no matter whether what he reads ever came

into

into the immediate way of his recital; for it is his buſineſs here to ſtudy general ſublimity of manner, and general greatneſs and ſenſibility, not the expreſſion of any particular paſſage.

I ſhould not expect the player to be enough maſter of the Greek to read in the original, the Œdipus of Sophocles, in which alone there is more true greatneſs, and more real pathos, than in all the dramatic pieces that have been written; and he will have no conception of it from any tranſlation or imitation. As much may be ſaid with reſpect to the other Greek tragedies; and the greateſt poems in other kinds are alſo among the writings of this people: he is therefore to have recourſe to the heroic poems of our own language, and, beyond all, to Milton's Paradiſe loſt.

In this there is more magnificence, and more true ſublimity than in any thing elſe that can fall in the way of the Engliſh reader: And there are paſſages that will affect the heart that has true ſenſibility, more ſtrongly than any that occur in our beſt tragedies. He who has but the ſeeds of this great quality in him, if he will in a perfect retirement, and with a mind diveſted of all other thoughts, read daily,

parts

parts of this great poem, ſtop at the paſſages which affect him, moſt of which fill his heart with greatneſs, and his eyes with tears of admiration, which raiſe him from his ſeat, and carry him out of himſelf; he will ſoon find thoſe ſeeds dilate and grow toward maturity.

There are many of thoſe paſſages which have all this effect upon a ſenſible reader: ſome from their ſole magnificence, others from their paſſion. Let him give nature her full ſcope, when they affect him. I have ſaid, let him ſtop at them; but let him never read them over again. The firſt effect is the greateſt, and all he has to do is to give way to it. Let him give himſelf up without reſtraint to the emotions he feels on this occaſion, and without addition, or abridgment, throw every thing into action. To obſerve every minute article of this, were as contemptible as to practiſe attitudes in a glaſs: But let him repeat and encourage the whole; and by a practice like this, he will fall into a way of giving a looſe to himſelf upon the ſtage, on the like occaſions. The action and the expreſſion will ariſe from the occaſion, unſtudied, unpremeditated, and as it were natural to him; and being natural as well as great, it will affect every body: And this is the character of true ſenſibility.

As a player who has natural ſenſibility and comprehenſion indulges this feeling, which comes upon him irreſiſtibly as he reads ſuch paſſages; he will find his mind enlarge, and, as it were, dilate itſelf. It will take in ſenſations which he was before unacquainted with, and for which there is no name; and it will reject that which is little, or low, or mean, and indulge itſelf altogether in what is magnificent and ſublime. Even in things in themſelves weak, as ſorrow, it will reduce all to to the ſtandard of heroiſm: for heroes may grieve, tho' it muſt be like heroes. And he will find, as he gives way to the emotions theſe ſentiments or ſeveral forms of ſenſibility require, his face, his features, and his perſon thrown into forms and attitudes of expreſſion. Theſe he is to encourage, and tho' in the immediate way of his profeſſion he will never have occaſion to uſe exactly any of theſe, becauſe exactly the ſame circumſtances will never occur to the character, yet he will have formed and accuſtomed himſelf to expreſſion in general, by the geſture and countenance; and without his ſtudying the particular mode of it for any paſſage, ſome great, or at leaſt ſome proper attitudes and looks will always ariſe from the occaſion; and he will

aſtoniſh his audience, which is the nobleſt of all ways of pleaſing.

His expreſſion thus will have eaſe; for it will be unconſtrained, the effect of natural emotions, not artifice; and it will have another great perfection, it will be varied and appropriated; for it will riſe out of the occaſion, and be different under every circumſtance. Whether it be a Bajazet that is angry, an Horatio that is angry, or a Richard that is angry, the player who has ſtudied in what manner to expreſs the ſenſibility of anger, will do the ſame things; but he, in whom expreſſion is the offspring of the occaſion, not of conſideration and ſtudy, will have it different in each. In the ſame manner, the ſorrow of a mother, of a wife, or of a miſtreſs, are diſtinct things; and while the actreſs who practiſes before her toilet is the ſame in each circumſtance, ſhe to whom nature dictates will be different in all. This is a perfection we ſee in Mrs. Pritchard: the judicious admire it; and even they who have not comprehenſion for that, applaud her. This is the difference between real merit, and the ſhew of it; the latter affects only a part of an audience, and that the worſt; the former all.

Care muſt be taken, that as the ſenſibility be not ſuffered to expreſs itſelf meanly in certain circumſtances, ſo in others it be not ſuffered to ſhew itſelf coarſely. Dignity is to forbid the one, and delicacy to prevent the other.

Poets ſometimes err in this reſpect; they draw characters that are not ſo properly miſerable as diſguſtful. The beggar who expoſes his unwholeſome and uncleanly limbs, often excites averſion inſtead of pity; and in the ſame manner we ſometimes are diſguſted upon the ſtage, where it was intended we ſhould be affected with compaſſion. The actreſs who has that characteriſtic of her ſex, delicacy, will ſoften, inſtead of exaggerating ſuch paſſages in her part, and more than her own ſex will admire her for it. Theſe are things loſt upon the vulgar, but they never fail of praiſe among the beſt judges.

As this ſenſibility in great characters can have place only on great occaſions, ſo it muſt, to be in character, be always expreſſed pure and unmixed. Philoſophy does not more ſtrongly combat the ſenſes than heroiſm: as that places men above the reach of poverty or pain, this ſets them out of the reach of concern for

trifles,

trifles, or ſorrow for common misfortunes. There are ſtrokes that they muſt feel, tho' proof againſt moſt; and theſe they are to feel only as virtue directs. The ſenſibility expreſſed by a great mind carries in it ſomething great; and to expreſs it juſtly, it muſt be without alloy or mixture of mean, of intereſted, or indeed of common conſiderations. If he ſee ſucceſsful villainy prevail, and receive the ſtroke by ſome expected incident while he is on the ſtage, and under the eye of the audience, he is not to ſeem beyond the reach of human accidents, for that were to be more than man; nor to bear it without feeling, for that were to have ſtupidity in the place of ſenſibility. He is to feel it, and to expreſs his feeling, but that not by tears; for great characters are not capable of ſuch meanneſs, but by ſuch expreſſion as he has accuſtomed himſelf to in conſidering characters of dignity. Tho' tears are mean, yet they are ſometimes graceful; tho' not to be indulged on all occaſions, there are ſome that ſhould command them: But then they are to be as much raiſed above the vulgar character as the reſt of the expreſſion. They are to be

Tears ſuch as angels ſhed.

And even of theſe but few, and but for a moment.

The tears of Abudah in the ſiege of Damaſcus, are little more than thoſe of common lamentation; yet they become dignified by the apology:

Thou wert a man of ———
Pardon if it be a fault in human ſorrow
For injur'd merit, tho't be in a face.

And tho' we have not the fortune to ſee this amiable character performed by any who can give it the true ſpirit at this time, there was among the old players, one who from his own goodneſs of heart could do it; and who had a peculiar way of ennobling this ſorrow.

In order to improve a natural ſenſibility, the next thing to inciting into the mind thoughts which are great and proper is, the baniſhing from us ſuch as are unworthy. Among theſe come almoſt all that can concern the actor in private life. He ſhould, as much as poſſible, alienate himſelf from theſe, and obtain an entire com-

command over them, otherwiſe they will blend themſelves with thoſe of his character, and debaſe and ſpoil all his expreſſion.

There are authors, who in their common intercourſe with the world, quarrel almoſt with every body in it; and in the writings of theſe we ſee perſons and things repreſented, not as they are, but as the private paſſions of theſe people would have them ſuppoſed. The ſame fate that a character in real life ſuffers from ſuch, attends one of thoſe of the ſtage, when the actor, who is to repreſent it, is before hand poſſeſſed with ſome paſſion of his own, which has nothing to do with that of his character. The ſame miſchief happens from inadvertence in one caſe, that ſprings from malice or partiality in the other, and the action of the player is diſturbed, mixed, and unintelligible.

The women of the theatres are more ſubject to be carried away from their parts by their own concerns, than the men; for they have leſs reſolution, and more temptations. A young actreſs, who has deſcended from her dreſſing-room very well prepared to repreſent Andromache, has met with ſome civility from one of thoſe

idle people who crowd the ſcenes, and full of her own triumph and ſatisfaction, has ſmirked and bridled throughout the character. We had, not very many years ſince, an inſtance of an actreſs, who promiſed a great deal on her firſt appearance, but who made ſo many conqueſts that night, that ſhe was too full of her triumphs as a woman, to think any thing of her parts as an actreſs afterward. We have at preſent a young player of the ſame ſex, who promiſes as much: who is formed by nature for making, at leaſt, as many conqueſts; but who, we hope, will be more wiſe than to be carried away by them. If Miſs Noſſiter will keep up her attention to her part, ſhe has natural ſenſibility enough, and it will diſcloſe itſelf more in characters in which ſhe has been leſs tutored than in this of Juliet: but upon her attention depends her ſucceſs; for if ſhe ſuffer the vanity of the woman to mix itſelf with the feeling of the actreſs, it will quickly overpower it, and ſhe become as cold, as unfeeling, as abſurd, and as contemptible as the other.

Mrs. Woffington, who has many qualifications of a great actreſs, beſide the advantage of one of the fineſt perſons that ever

ever adorned a theatre, is very apt to be faulty in this reſpect; there was obſerved, while ſhe was in England, great deficience in her performances, at different times; and that not in different, but the ſame characters: And the ſame obſervation is made in Ireland, where audiences are leſs critical; it was all owing to this fault, of mixing the concerns and the paſſions of the woman with thoſe of the actreſs.

Mrs. Woffington has great ſenſibility; and ſhe has more than moſt players of either ſex, given a looſe to nature in the expreſſing it; to this ſhe owed the greateſt part of her fame as an actreſs: and in this ſhe always excelled, when her private paſſions did not interfere. But when ſome new intimacy charmed her, or when ſhe was in terrors about the critical ſituation of an old one; nay, when ſhe levelled the artillery of her charms, but in wantonneſs, againſt ſome man of figure, of the audience; or when ſhe did but ſuppoſe ſhe looked better than ordinary, or was only dreſſed to a peculiar advantage, ſo low will female vanity deſcend; the joy, or the terror, or the hope, or the pride, mixed itſelf with the ſentiments of the cha-

racter; and it was ſo much of Mrs. Woffington, that it was very little of nature.

Mrs. Ward had ſome merit, tho' not a very conſiderable ſhare of it; ſhe loſt it at once, and people wondered that a manager of judgment ſhould have engaged her. She ſacrificed all her praiſe, as an actreſs, to the pride of being admired as a woman. Mrs. Vincent has owed to the ſame thought, originally, that eternal ſimper which dwells upon her countenance. The ſmile which teſtified the joy ſhe took in admiration, mixed itſelf at firſt with every expreſſion of her ſenſibility; and in the end took the place of it.

It is not juſt to name this actreſs without obſerving, that there are ſeveral characters in comedy, which become her extremely well; and that where the ſingularity of her manner, which ſhe will now never be able to overcome, does not interfere with the character, ſhe muſt, in many of them be ſeen with pleaſure.

All who remember Mrs. Oldfield, ſpeak of her, at leaſt in the latter part of her time, as of a compoſed diſpoſition, eaſy in her ſituation, and out of love with thoſe changes from attachment to attachment, which had once filled her heart as well

well as head; ſhe was, when ſhe entered the theatre, altogether the actreſs. Mrs. Cibber ſeems to have too good an underſtanding, and too manly a conſtancy of mind to let any incident, in ordinary life ruffle her temper. This ſerenity of mind, in real life, gives the full ſcope to every aſſumed paſſion; and it was to this that the late ornament of the ſtage, and that the preſent glory of it, in the ſame ſex, owed, in a great degree, that conſummate ſpirit and propriety, with which they entered into their parts, and that conſummate applauſe that attended the performers.

CHAP. VI.

Concerning Spirit, and what is called, in an actor, Fire.

THE gifts of nature to the player are four, three of them regard the mind, and one the body: in that, there can require only figure, of which we ſhall ſpeak in a ſucceeding chapter. The three which regard the mind are underſtanding, ſenſibility, and ſpirit. There are thoſe among

perſormers, as well as among audiences, who confound them, but they are certainly diſtinct; for one of them may be poſſeſſed without the others.

We have ſeen, in the courſe of theſe obſervations, that a man may have underſtanding without ſenſibility; and it is equally poſſible, that he may have ſenſibility and underſtanding both, without ſpirit; or, what is called by a more expreſſive word, fire. We find, in ordinary life, men who comprehend what they read, but are too ſedate in their natural temper of mind to be much moved by it; we ſee, upon the ſtage, people who have ſenſibility without underſtanding; and the crying of women who drink is a proof of it in the world. We have alſo ſome evidences, that a man may perfectly comprehend what an author means, nay, and his heart may be affected thoroughly by the paſſions, yet from a natural ſluggiſhneſs of diſpoſition he ſhall not be able to give life to his ſenſibility: If he be at any time violent, it is by force, and ſeeing the conſtraint, we allow no praiſe to the action, becauſe it ought to be altogether the effect of nature.

Inſtances of this occur on both the theatres; but as it is a defect of nature, and all of them from that conſciouſneſs their underſtanding gives them of it, try, tho' in vain, to mend it, it were cruel to name them. Theſe would put upon us a falſe fire, an artificial heat, in the place of the natural; but that is paying copper for gold, and all eyes diſtinguiſh it, nor can any be ignorant of the difference in value. Others there are who never attempt any thing of this kind, and call it a fault in thoſe who do. Temperate nature is their great boaſt: and they would perſuade us, that naked trees and froſted fields are the greateſt beauties of nature, becauſe they live in a country that is all the year covered with ſnow.

It is natural to expreſs this fire, becauſe it is natural to have it; and all that is natural becomes the player. The poet, who knows mankind, draws his characters from what he ſees, or what he conceives may have been in real life, and as he draws, he would have the other repreſent them. There are tame and ſedate people repreſented on the ſtage; but there are alſo hot and fiery, and theſe are the moſt ſtriking.

The

The author expects the player to repreſent what he intended; but the player who has this great quality, who poſſeſſes this Promethean heat that animates, and is the only thing which can animate the common clay of mankind into the true actor, will do vaſtly more than the beſt poet in the world could paint to him.

The author is tied down to the ſingle circumſtance of words; but the player has, within the ſcope of his profeſſion, the whole extent of expreſſion, geſture, air, look, and thoſe powerful things, which, tho' one has no name for any of them, dwell in the changes of every feature.

The player of true ſpirit, when it is directed by underſtanding, and awakened by ſenſibility, is no longer himſelf, when he aſſumes his character; he poſſeſſes himſelf that he is the king or hero he repreſents, and inſpired by the ſentiments of his author, and merely what his own mind conceives from the ſeveral circumſtances and incidents, he lives, not acts the ſcene. He is the prieſteſs of the Delphic God, who as ſoon as ſhe aſcended the ſacred tripod, became poſſeſſed, and uttered with a voice and mein, not her own, the ſacred oracles. All that the ſuppoſed celeſtial va-

vapour, riſing from the ſacred ground, could do for this enthuſiaſt, the dignity of ſentiment, and force of paſſion, execute for the player, who with his true perception, has in his nature this glorious heat. He glows with tranſports not his own, he treads the earth with the majeſty of the monarch he repreſents, a dignity dwells upon his brow, more diſtinguiſhing him as a king, than the diadem which ſurrounds it, that Hamlet's player king can wear; the ſpirit of the ſcene diffuſes itſelf thro' the whole frame; he feels the genius of the poet animating his own ſoul; and as he brings his conceptions into life, a thouſand new ones ariſe from them, and dignify and decorate the repreſentation.

Thoſe lifeleſs actors who abuſe what they cannot attain, and call ſpirit and fire faults in a performer, are a ſect who have no followers; but there are another claſs of them, whoſe doctrines, tho' they no more deſerve it than the other, have made their way among their audiences; theſe, altho' they allow fire to be an excellence in the player, yet ſay it is eaſy for him to have too much of it. They call theſe great expreſſions of it faults, which call for an applauſe from the audience that all

all their frosty virtues never could attain; and as they lay this to the charge of the greatest actors, there are enough ready to catch at but the appearance, or pretence of faults, in those who claim too much praise; to propagate the opinion.

The question is not, as they suppose, whether these actors, in these places, have too much fire, but whether an actor can have too much of it; and the answer is plainly, no. Mr. Garrick has more fire than any actor in the world probably ever possessed; but did any body ever suppose that Mr. Garrick had too much? None ever thought it. There are passages, and they are more frequent in the greatest characters, where no fire can be too much; and for the rest, he who, with this qualification of the actor, has the two others, understanding and sensibility, will never exert it in the wrong place, or in a faulty degree.

When Lear exclaims against his ungrateful daughters:

No, ye unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on ye both,
That all the world shall — I will do such things,

What

What they are yet I know not, but they
ſhall be
The terrors of the earth—you think I'll
weep——
This heart ſhall break into a thouſand pieces
Before I'll weep——

Does any man ſuppoſe it is poſſible the actor can pronounce the broken ſentences with too much ſpirit in this place? can any fire be more than the poet thought proper to throw into it? Certainly not. Moſt probably there never was enough till this great player gave life to the character.

If people indeed ſuppoſe noiſe to be only expreſſion of fire, it is very eaſy that, according to their ideas, they may have too much of it; for voice is in the power of the organs, and a mere machine may make it; but thoſe who admire this quality in that actor, in whom it is ſo very perfect, will form very different ideas of it.

Men will obtrude themſelves upon the ſtage who have not the qualifications, and they will ſuppoſe themſelves qualified for characters of one kind, if not of another. When they are perſuaded that they want fire, they will ſay fire is faulty in great characters. We have ſeen theſe cold

actors

actors attempt thoſe which they thought characters adapted to their manner; but we have been convinced by it of juſt the contrary to what they expected we ſhould find. We have diſcovered that there are no characters ſo grave, that ſome ſpirit is not required in ſome parts of them; nor indeed is it poſſible that there ſhould, ſince the ſtage is not the ſchool for leſſons of philoſophy: its buſineſs is with the paſſions, and theſe will never be expreſſed without this fire and ſpirit. The rigid Cato riſes into warmth, when he reproaches his ſoldiers:

Am I diſtinguiſh'd from you but by toils!
Who was the laſt of all your hoſt that
thirſted?

and many other paſſages of the ſame, or a like kind, never were intended to be pronounced with a philoſophic gravity. The very form of interrogation was given by the poet to point to the actor that there was to be ſpirit in the delivery. Addiſon was as far from violence in his diſpoſition as any author, yet it is eaſy to ſee that he was moved when he put down theſe paſſages.

The

The cool Horatio has fire, even in his expreſſions of gratitude: his declarations of friendſhip are all ſpirited; and there is in his reſentment great paſſion. It is true, that we have ſeen this character played with a philoſophic ſpirit; but we have ſeen great ſpirit exerted in it by Mr. Barry, and perhaps yet more by Mr. Moſſop. I ſay perhaps, for that Mr. Barry is leſs conſpicuouſly ſpirited in it, is owing to his ſenſe of the character: No man conſiders his buſineſs ſo much as this player, and I believe he cannot be properly ſaid to have leſs fire in Horatio than Mr. Moſſop, but that it is more regulated. They both deſerve great praiſe in it. The galleries will naturally be moſt pleaſed with Mr. Moſſop, but the boxes give the palm the other way.

Even Tamerlane, more than once, brightens into rage, his philoſophy checks the ſallies of paſſion as unworthy a king; but there is great art in the actor, who ſhews that

The fiery ſeeds of wrath are in his temper,

tho' he will not let them be kindled into a blaze.

If

If theſe characters cannot be played well by an actor who is deficient in fire, and it is plain they cannot, it is very reaſonable to conclude, without a tedious and critical examination, that there are no conſiderable ones that can be done without it.

A good writer will never introduce a character that is not capable of being diſturbed by paſſions: and as to thoſe which are naturally the moſt ſedate when they are moved, and it is for that they are introduced, they give the actor, who has true fire, the happieſt of all opportunities of exerting it.

There is ſuch a thing as rage without ſpirit, as there is magnificence without dignity. We have ſeen one actor tell us,

It were an eaſy leap
To pluck bright honour from the pale-fac'd moon,

with the temper of a philoſopher, and another ſcream it out with the fire of a Bajazet, both equally contemptible. Fire is requiſite in ſuch a paſſage; for it is the only thing that can raiſe ſuch a rant above contempt; but we are no more to take the ſtrained look, contorted geſture, and roaring

roaring voice of one of theſe people, for true fire, than the ſtupidity of the other for moderation. There require, as has been ſaid, underſtanding and ſenſibility to regulate and direct this fire; but with theſe the player cannot poſſeſs too much of it. It is to be encouraged, not checked. Our beſt players owe more of their praiſe to it, than to all their qualities beſide; and if they would encourage it, they would obtain ſtill more.

If there be any characters in which the player may arrive at great excellence with little fire, they are thoſe of women, not of men. Lavinia is one of theſe; we ſaw it played by Mrs. Elmy; and tho' Mrs. Cibber performed Caliſta, the point was doubtful which claimed the greateſt applauſe. We ſaw Mrs. Elmy firſt in this character. In others, which ſhe attempted afterwards, we perceived a deficiency of this fire, which was ſo little requiſite in Lavinia: and we ſaw how neceſſary it was; for ſhe obtained little praiſe with all her ſenſibility and all her underſtanding.

Mrs. Elmy is an inſtance how much may be done by art to improve this warmth, if there be any ſpark of it from nature. She ſaw her defect, and ſhe has applied

applied the remedy. She has practiſed and ſtudied till, in her Deſdemona of the preſent ſeaſon, (little as is the fire required in that tame character) ſhe has raiſed it above what we had ſeen before, by what ſhe threw into it, and that within the rules of ſtrict propriety; and ſhe has ſhewn us ſhe has enough even of this great requiſite, for almoſt any other part.

We ſaw her afterwards too cool and too tame in the Lady in Comus, tho' otherwiſe excellent; but when we hear her in that character again threaten the great wizard

That all his magic ſtructures rear'd ſo high,
Shou'd ſhatter into heaps o'er his falſe head,

we ſhall perceive in them fire and ſpirit enough, almoſt to make the very ſcene in which ſhe repreſents it, tremble. We ſhall ſee the immortal, to whom they are addreſſed, tremble indeed,

As when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus
To ſome of Satan's crew;

for

for no actor can want the ſenſibility to be affected by ſuch words, as ſhe will now pronounce them.

In order to know how impoſſible it is for an actor to have too much fire, it is neceſſary to ſettle truly what it is. We have ſeen ſufficiently what it is not: But it is as plain, that it conſiſts in a daring ſpirit, a vivacity of imagination, and rapidity of thought, as that it has no connection with noiſe and bluſtering, tho' they are continually connected with it; and are too often miſtaken for it, by the common obſerver.

It is to this ſpirit and fire, that the repreſentation owes its great air of reality. Underſtanding will make a player perceive properly, and ſenſibility will make him do it feelingly; but all this may be done in reading the paſſage; it is this fire and ſpirit that produce the living character, and he who has judgment to regulate this, can never have too much of it.

To have the true character of an actor of fire, the expreſſions which obtain the praiſe muſt be always appropriated to the paſſage; nay more, they are only juſt when they abſolutely ariſe from it. We ſee people who in wrong places exhibit a par-

parcel of cauſeleſs geſtures, and roar out ſome extravagant exclamations; and their friends ſay they have too much fire. Such people have not too much fire, but too little underſtanding: they want that ſpirit, and that even in thoſe places which they are ſuppoſed to poſſeſs in this redundance. Their playing is like the writings of ſome authors, which are ſaid, by the vulgar, to have too much wit in them, but which have in reality no wit at all.

We ſhall ſee how common a deficience of fire is among our players, if we recollect how many paſſages there are in the plays acted continually, in which there is a great deal of it required, and how little of it is ſhown.

The character of Caſſio, in Othello, is accuſed of inſipidity, and a good player ſeldom chuſes to be concerned in it. But certainly there is one ſcene of it, at leaſt, that ought to recommend it to the greateſt that ever trod a ſtage; the recollection of that brave honeſt man, after he had been ſeduced into drunkenneſs by a villain, and ruined by the conſequences of it, is animated in a manner not to be equalled in another paſſage of any play in the world. The player who had fire enough to ſpeak

as

as Shakeſpear meant, through the ſhort and abrupt ſentences.

> *O thou invincible ſpirit of wine, if thou haſt no name to be known by, let us call thee Devil—to be now a ſenſible man, and by and by a fool, and preſently a beaſt!—Every inordinate cup is unbleſs'd, and the ingredient is a devil.*

He who ſhould do bare juſtice to the author in this ſhort paſſage, would acquire himſelf an applauſe more than by the acting fifty characters. We have not the fortune to ſee this part of Caſſio well acted. But in a performance of this play by ſome gentlemen for the entertainment of their friends, Maſter Delaval, a boy, came nearer to the true ſpirit, than any actor we have ſeen, and was more applauded than his brother, who acted Jago excellently, for the whole character. We ſee by this how abſolutely this fire is the gift of nature, and how ſtrongly it affects an audience.

The poet who gives to his footmen and chambermaids, polite wit and de icacy of ſentiments, or makes his lover in the anguiſh of his mind write madrigals, is like

the actor who bellows out paſſages like theſe, with all the rant of tragedy. The abſurdities of the one are not wit, nor is the noiſe of the other fire.

The actor, who is violent in a wrong place, is ſaid to poſſeſs too much fire. No ſuch matter, while he expreſſes what he ſhould not feel, he is dead to what he ought to feel; and while he perſuades himſelf, that if he do err, he is run away with by the fire of his temper, thoſe who judge better will ſay, he is a martyr to his want of judgment.

Many having ſeen the beſt actors of their time ſuppreſſing this fire in the general, and only giving it ſcope on certain occaſions; or raiſing it, as it were, from a ſmall beginning, to the moſt exceſſive vehemence, becauſe they have been pleaſed with this in ſome things, expect it in all; and ſuppoſe him to have too much fire who lets it blaze out at once, and in every incident. In this alſo the common opinion errs. There are paſſages in which it is to be exerted by degrees, becauſe the firſt part of them requires little of it: but for one inſtance of this kind, we ſee the actor fifty times ſaving himſelf by a paltry artifice, that he may have more fire than perhaps

haps is needful in ſome particular paſſage; or even making himſelf too tame in one place, that his ſpirit may have the benefit of the contraſt in another. The one is limited to a few inſtances only, the other is abſolutely wrong; and an audience ought to reſent the impoſition.

When Juliet retires to her chamber with the ſleeping potion, it is natural that ſhe ſhould riſe, by degrees, to a full ſenſe of the poſſible horror of the undertaking: the author intended this gradual and glorious riſe of the paſſions, to the very height of temporary diſtraction: he who has ſeen Mrs. Cibber, from the firſt ſuſpicion of the draught not working as intended, riſe to the terror of her waking before the time, finding herſelf encompaſſed

With reeking ſhanks, and yellow chopleſs ſkulls,

becoming diſtracted with the horror of the place,

Plucking the mangled Tibalt from his ſhroud,

'till at length ſhe ſhall, madly playing with her forefathers joints,

With ſome great kinſman's bone,
As with a club daſh out her deſperate brains,

has ſeen all that is poſſible to be conveyed this way, of terror; and has had an example of that gradation by which fire and ſpirit may be raiſed, according to the circumſtances, from the moſt ſlight ſtep to the moſt exalted height. All this is excellent, becauſe it is proper. The ſpirit of this ſcene is connected with the ſenſibility, and riſes with it. There is not, perhaps, any thing on the Britiſh ſtage ſuperior to the excellence Mrs. Cibber diſplays in this paſſage. The lady who has made her firſt appearance this winter, in the ſame character, performed this difficult and ſpirited ſcene alſo very happily and greatly: but to her there was leſs praiſe due for it, becauſe it was not original.

There are other inſtances of this proper raiſing of the performer's fire, in which all obtain applauſe, and all deſerve it, becauſe nature dictates, and judgment confirms them. Of the other kind of ma-

nagement of the natural fire, we ſee a ſtrong inſtance in Mr. Moſſop's performance of Zanga, in the Revenge. Very few actors have more fire than Mr. Moſſop; and in the laſt act of that play he manifeſts it all with great eclat. But to be poſſeſſed of ſtrength enough for this, he reſerves himſelf for it in the whole courſe of the preceding action. Perhaps he is tame alſo in the former part of the play, by way of contraſt, that this ſpirit may there make the greater figure. By his ſpirit here, we have no right to enter into an actor's thoughts: but he is under the direction of one who has ſo much the art of huſbanding every thing, and ſo many artifices to ſhew every thing that is valuable to the beſt advantage, that it is too likely.

Let me ſpeak plainly and freely to this actor, for whom I have great eſteem; there are very few things on the ſtage ſuperior to his playing the whole laſt act of the Revenge; for it depends almoſt entirely upon him. But in the reſt of the play there are a great many fine, and a great many ſpirited paſſages which he paſſes over too careleſly. Nay, there is a ſpirit in the whole character, as the author

has drawn it; altho' it does appear in any conſiderable degree, as he plays it. This actor has fire enough, and ſtrength enough to execute the whole; and he ſhould do it, as he knows is proper, and as he is able to perform it. We expect conſiſtency in characters; and the author gives this in vain, if the player does not follow his inſtructions. As the character of Zanga is written, we from the beginning expect all the fell rage and determinate revenge of the laſt act; and ſo we ought, for no new injury provokes it. We expect, and we are prepared for all that is to happen, or for the worſt that can happen, and ſee he only waits for an opportunity; but if the actor chuſes to ſink the greateſt part of the action below what the author intended, in order to raiſe the reſt beyond what he ever conceived, we ſee a change, as it were, in the perſon, where there is no change in the circumſtance; and are ſurprized at the laſt part of Zanga's character, as unlike the firſt.

Zanga is a prince, he is captive to the man who killed his father, and he has received a blow from him, the injury, and indignities provoke him to revenge; but there is nothing happens to exaſperate him

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in the courſe of the play: all theſe things have paſſed long before, and he has been determined to revenge them: let us therefore ſee the hate, and ſavage magnanimity of the character in every part of the play; and do not let us ſee the prince break out upon us at the end, when thro' the courſe of the play we have looked upon him as a perſon of no character ſuperior to his preſent fortune.

An actor may have feeling who has not fire, and it will make no figure without the aſſiſtance of that natural, tho' not conſtant attendant. In the performer who plays Sciolto at one of the theatres, we ſee all the deſpair and anguiſh of the fond parent, when his daughter is proved a proſtitute; and we can diſtinguiſh real tears in his eyes, when he recounts to his ſon-in-law what were his expectations from this alliance. Here is all the ſenſibility in the world, and yet it diſpleaſes; for it wants the due portion of ſpirit: it is whining with too little reſentment in the mixture. On the contrary, we ſee at the other houſe a Sciolto, who has, as the vulgar would underſtand it, too much of this fire throughout the whole character; he has too much reſentment, and too little

tenderneſs, and is more ſpiritedly angry than becomes the father, even tho' he be a Roman.

It is not that this actor has too much fire, but he would do well to introduce into the ſame ſcenes a little more ſenſibility of the tender kind; thus it is not the redundance of one good quality, but a deficience in the proportion in which he mixes another with it that cauſes the cenſure. It is the fault of each of the actors to indulge what is his prevailing character too far. But they have both copied real nature; and there are particular parts which ſuit them ſo well, that even their exceſſes become them. The greateſt character of the greateſt player is that of being univerſal; any thing under that rank muſt be content with the praiſe of being excellent in ſome parts, at the price of a defectiveneſs in others.

Thoſe who have feeling without fire, are not able to expreſs that very feeling: and in thoſe with whom ſpirit gets the better of ſenſibility, it always runs into exceſs. It is when theſe qualities are connected together, that they ſhew themſelves in their fulleſt excellence; and the ſtrongeſt inſtance that perhaps the ſtage has ever given

given of the effect and force of this connection, is in ſome ſpeeches of Mr. Garrick's Lear. When that conſummate actor pronounces the imprecation:

— hear nature
——— if thou doſt intend
To make that creature fruitful, change thy purpoſe:
Pronounce upon her womb the barren curſe.

we tremble at the fury with which it is delivered, and feel the force of the reiterated expreſſion; it is not tautology or redundance, paſſion dictates it, and paſſion cannot ſay too much.

——— but if ſhe muſt bring forth,
Defeat her joy with ſome diſtorted birth
Or monſtrous form,
And ſo perverſe of ſpirit that it may live
Her torment, as 'twas born.

we feel all the human breaſt can contain of rage, and indignation, and hatred, ſcarce blameable, altho' unnatural. It is impoſſible to ſay whether Mr. Garrick expreſſes in this paſſage more fire or more feeling. Each is carried to the height,

and they caſt a new luſtre upon one another.

Few men have ſenſibility without any mixture of fire, or fire without any thing of ſenſibility; but even if there were ſuch men they would not be uſeleſs on the theatre; they would be fitted for certain parts, and none but the greateſt muſt ſuppoſe themſelves qualified for all.

The modern plays afford us characters, in which fire and ſpirit are all that is required; for the authors have given them neither ſenſibility nor underſtanding. They have written as if convinced of the obſervation that

Fool is the ſtuff of which heaven makes an hero;

and where the author never intended that they ſhould either feel or think, it is not neceſſary that they ſhould have the faculties for the expreſſion of either.

On the other hand Shakeſpear himſelf has given us characters where only one of the two is neceſſary, and yet they affect us ſtrongly. Adam, in As you like it, is one of thoſe in which ſenſibility alone is ne-

neceſſary; and it is from this circumſtance that Mr. Berry, who runs over with ſenſibility ſucceeds in it ſo happily. This is not the only character of its kind. Mr. Berry has been often thrown out of his proper road; but while he is kept in it, there is not a more affecting player. In a character like that of Adam, we expect no grace, dignity, or elocution: all we can ſuppoſe we ſhall meet with is integrity and feeling; and there is a great air of the one diffuſed into every line of this actor's face from his heart; and he poſſeſſes more than all men of the other.

There may be characters in which we ſhould be diſpleaſed to ſee affection manifeſt itſelf by crying; but in an old ſervant, whoſe love is heightened by the diſtreſs of his young maſter, nothing can be ſo ſtriking, becauſe nothing is ſo natural. We did not know how much we could be made to feel by an actor's feeling, before we ſaw Mr. Berry in this character, weep out his cautions;

O unhappy youth,
Come not within theſe doors,
This houſe is but a butchery,
Abhor it, fear it, do not enter it.

And when, to alleviate the terrors of his running into that exile which he adviſed, he offers him the whole ſtore he had reſerved to maintain him in his age, and adds,

He that doth the raven feed,
Be comfort to my age,

we mingle our tears with his, the mixture of piety ennobles the affection, and we feel with him every ſentiment he ſhews us, that he feels ſo ſtrongly.

There are, however, but few of thoſe inſtances, in which ſenſibility alone will command applauſe: in general it obtains it only, as there is connected with it a ſufficient quantity of this fire to invigorate and inforce it. In general, the coldeſt playing is the worſt. The actor ought to be as afraid of this, as his author of inſipidity. Many paſſages cannot be expreſſed too ſtrongly; and if in the ſame parts prudence requires moderation in the beginning, that ſtrength may be reſerved for the end, ſtill there muſt not be an abſolute coldneſs: we ſhould deſpiſe the perſon who was to run a long race, and ſet out at full ſpeed; but then we

we would not have him begin at a foot pace: for in all things there muſt be proportion.

Mr. Moſſop has been obſerved to be too tame in the firſt part of Zanga, that he may ſhew all his ſtrength in the end; and the ſame thing is to be obſerved of Mr. Ryan in Oreſtes, there is one ſcene in this part which requires the utmoſt fire and ſpirit of the player, and Mr. Ryan gives it all that it demands. The part of his raving is worthy the greateſt praiſe: he has ſtudied every attitude and every accent, and makes the horror of the ſcene riſe by degrees upon us to the higheſt pitch of which the mind is capable: but it is not neceſſary, nor can it be proper, that the reſt of the character ſhould be paſſed over with a negligent indifference to reſerve the force for this. It is not neceſſary either to the voice or to the credit of the player. He has ſtrength to give a due force to the whole, and there is a ſuperiority in this particular ſcene, that will ſufficiently diſcloſe itſelf, be the reſt done ever ſo well. In the mean time the poet certainly meant that when Oreſtes tells his miſtreſs ſpeaking of his rival,

Firſt let me tear him piece-meal. He ſhall die,
He dies by me—

and uſes other expreſſions of equal vehemence, they ſhould be attended with all the force of a ſpirited and violent delivery. The nature of the words requires it; and we ſhould, if they were ſo pronounced, ſee the character uniform, not tame in one part, and mad in another. There have been repreſentations of a Richard in our memory, in which the ſame unnatural fault prevailed. We ſaw a tame uſurper thro' four acts, that in the fifth Richard might have voice enough to tell Richmond,

He was hoarſe with calling him to battle.

On the contrary, we have ſeen in the laſt act, ſometimes their fire get the better of their prudence, and their precipitancy to be great, prevent their continuing ſo. Mr. Garrick gave us inſtances of this in Pierre, in this very Richard, and ſome other parts. We learn by the contrary ob-

obſervations that moderation is the great rule that will guide to what is right.

We are ready to excuſe this inconſiderate violence in Pierre, in particular, becauſe of the natural demand there is for it; but we are always ſorry that it is indulged. Pierre, in the midſt of the conſpirators braving them all when they threaten the life of his friend,

Who's he will ſhed the blood
That's dear to me? Is't you, or you, or you, Sir?
What not one ſpeak.
Why peep your coward ſwords out of their ſhell,
Why do you not all brandiſh them like mine?

muſt feel a noble warmth, heightened by the diſdain in which he holds them, while he threatens to hang them up, like dogs, in cluſters; and we are ready to excuſe, as I ſaid, and too many are ready to admire and applaud the warmth and fire with which he pronounces the menace, and paints the reproof. But when we conſider the matter more nearly, we ſhall find that a judicious actor would moderate

rate that fire; for a perſon ſo ſuperior as Pierre, would not condeſcend to be angry with men he ſo much deſpiſed.

This ſingle conſideration would lead us to approve the player, who in ſpite of the natural warmth of ſuch a paſſage, ſhould be temperate, in ſome degree; making his dignity get the better of his paſſion; but how much more ſhould we applaud his judgment when we found that by this management he had ſaved his ſtrength for a much greater occaſion; and after having ſurprized us with his noble diſdain in this ſcene with the conſpirators, ſhould aſtoniſh us with a nobler warmth, when calling up all his fire, on an occaſion worthy of it, he accuſes, reproaches, and upbraids the ſenate, charging them in his own cauſe, with ingratitude and injuſtice.

Fathers,
As you are pleaſed to call yourſelves of Venice,
Why theſe diſgraceful chains upon the limbs
That have ſo often laboured in your ſervice?
Are theſe the wreaths of triumph you beſtow
On thoſe who bring you conqueſt home and honours.

And

And when, with all the boldneſs of well diſſembled innocence he calls for the proof of what he is charged withal,

Shew me the wretch that's baſe enough,
And brave enough to tell me I am a traitor.

We admire, with reaſon, the full and the moſt daring uſe of that fire, which was certainly miſplaced before. We are grieved when the player, by his violence on a leſſer occaſion takes from himſelf the power of a ſufficient expreſſion in one that is ſo much greater and more worthy: but when he who has commanded himſelf under the provocation from a ſet of villains, throws off reſtraint before an ungrateful ſenate, we reverence even his fury. No ſpectator, who has a heart capable of greatneſs, but wiſhes there were indeed innocence to ſupport the glorious indignation.

To be able to do this properly, the firſt requiſite is to poſſeſs from nature a ſufficient portion of this Promethean heat, and the next is to regulate with diſcretion.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Concerning the figure of a player.

THERE are certain qualities of the mind neceſſary to the actors who are to play great and heroic characters, which are not needful to thoſe of a ſubordinate rank in the theatre: and the caſe is the ſame with reſpect to that great character of the body, figure. An elegance of perſon is abſolutely neceſſary to him who repreſents the firſt characters, whether in comedy or tragedy; but to the reſt, not; on the contrary, they are ſingularities of figure which may be far from injurious, uſeful. Theſe players are not expected to be univerſal; and it is to this advantage to be formed by nature for certain characters, provided there be but a competent number of them. Thus a meagre fellow ſhall be fitted by that very circumſtance for an Abraham Slender, a ſir Andrew Ague Cheek, and many other ſuch characters; and the make of his body, tho' ſingular, and in the whole diſadvantageous, ſhall in theſe characters be of great

great uſe to him. The ſame is to be obſerved of other ſingularities of perſon, even tho' they are faulty. A player who has neither talents nor ambition to aim at the capital parts, inſtead of quarrelling with nature, may thank her for theſe particularities.

Nay, the advantage is not confined to this ſubordinate claſs of characters. We have not at this time any player who has qualities of his mind ſufficient to make his bodily imperfections of ſervice to him; but among the actors ſo famous in a late age, Sandford was an eminent inſtance that they may be ſo. This man had the ſoul of a great player. All that nature ever gave to man of ſenſibility and fire he poſſeſſed. His underſtanding was ſtrong, and he poſſeſſed that ſort of genius which had immortalized the greateſt among the dramatick writers; if not in a degree of diſputing the laurel with them, yet ſufficient to give him that perfect comprehenſion of their meaning, which none ever will poſſeſs, except he who is but one degree below themſelves.

Sandford was ſhort and crooked. It was impoſſible for him to play amiable characters, but there are great ones that

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are deteſtable. All theſe fell to his ſhare; and thoſe who have ſeen him, ſay, that even the Richard of Mr. Garrick, tho' perhaps the greateſt modern performance, is very poor to that of this performer. We are not to ſuppoſe his natural deformity added any thing worthy to be taken notice of to the repreſentation; if only the character would bear to be repreſented by a perſon ſo deformed; and the whole ſoul had no diſtortion or defect, he found in it the means of exerting thoſe powers which would have dignified the greateſt and the faireſt character.

The man, therefore, who feels in himſelf this ſenſibility and fire; who glows when he ſees a good theatrical repreſentation, and envies every applauſe that is given to the performer, needs not be diſcouraged from attempting to ſhine, tho' in a ſingular way, upon the ſtage. Richard is not the only character which will bear deformity in the actor. Sandford did many. All that are villainous will bear perſonal deformity, and there is ſcope enough in the preſent ſet of plays for the full employment of ſuch a perſon.

The men are happier in this reſpect than the women: there are bad characters of that

that ſex, as well as of the other in our dramatic writings; but the audience would not bear a deformed or crooked actreſs. Not a lady Bountiful, or a lady Wiſh for't, would be received with this diſadvantage, nor the diſhoneſt any more than the moſt contemptible. The theatres are in a great meaſure ſupported by the young men of faſhion, and they go to ſee the actreſs rather than the character. It is enough to them that the name of ſome handſome actreſs is in the bills, they do not enquire what is her character. They go to admire her perſon; and they ſhall ſee that in one play, as well as another. The women will not confeſs that they pay the ſame regard to the figure of the actor, as the men do to that of the actreſs, but they do it. The perſon of a new performer is more talked of than his action; and if they are ſollicitous to ſee him out of the introductory Othello, it is not to examine what variety there is in his manner, but to ſee how he will look when the black is off his face.

No actor will ſucceed, unleſs he is the favourite of a party. The women moſt eaſily make ſuch a party; but to recommend him to them there muſt be a good figure.

figure. Indeed in the greater part of the firſt characters, an actor is out of nature, who has not ſomething amiable about him; but it is only in theſe characters that we are to look upon it as a requiſite. We know little of the neceſſities of a theatre, or conſider little the variety of its characters, if we ſuppoſe none but fine fellows are to be received into a company.

This toleration, however, except in the inſtances already mentioned, does not extend to abſolute deformities; Alexander might be wry-necked in real life, but we ſhould abominate a wry-necked Alexander on the ſtage. Cæſar and Scipio might have played their parts as well upon the theatre of the world, if one had been hump backed or the other bow-legged; but this would be intolerable in their repreſentations upon the ſtage. We preſerve the hero not the man in theſe repreſentations; and as we think nature ought to have coupled, at leaſt, a decent body with ſo great a ſoul, we expect, that when that connection is in the power of art, it ſhould be done.

A Blandford might, in real life, have his face disfigured by a wen, or a Bevil, with

with all his generoſity and honour, might have ſome vaſtly diſproportioned feature, but on the ſtage we ſhould not ſhew it. The goodneſs and the greatneſs of theſe characters pleaſe us, and we wiſh to ſee them exhibited without alloy; we are proud ſuch perſons have dignified our kind, and would have nothing interfere with that reſpect and eſteem we expreſs for the human ſpecies in their characters.

In comedy we expect ſomething to entertain us, and in tragedy ſomething that we may admire; but we ſhall never laugh at the drollery, while we are in pain about the perſon: nor can we entertain a true and pleaſing pride in the dignity of our natures, while the perſon who is to repreſent it to us by his actions, reminds us by his figure that we are pitiful animals. If we cannot bring ourſelves to approve an indelicate figure, yet let us not refuſe our applauſe to the ſoul that may lodge in it, provided the frame be not abſolutely ſhocking; and while we allow perſonal charms in one actreſs the place of merit, let us not refuſe to acknowledge in another thoſe qualities which are beyond the reach of age or diſeaſes.

Re-

Regular features, well proportioned limbs, and an air of dignity and elegance ought, doubtleſs, to recommend to us the polite lover or favoured prince: in the hero we have reaſon to admire, nay we have right to expect,

An eye like Mars to threaten and command,

and in the Pyrrhus's and Piercies of the ſtage, where dignity and force and fire are to characterize every action, and ought to be ſeen in every attitude,

A ſtation like the herald Mercury,
New-lighted on a heaven-kiſſing hill,

Nay, to take in the whole deſcription, in the player who is to be univerſal in great characters, we are even to expect,

That combination, and that form indeed,
Where every God doth ſeem to ſet his ſeal,
And give the world aſſurance of a man.

We are in the right to eſteem theſe advantages of perſon in the players intended for principal characters; for they not only ſtand in the place of merit, but are a ſpecies

cies of merit in them. Only do not let us expect them in all. Let us be content with the abſence of beauty and delicacy of the reſt; but it is not to be expected that we ſhould put up with abſolute deformity, unleſs on particular occaſions. Even the imperfections of the character are not to be real in the perſon. People go to a play to ſee imitations, not realities. They had rather ſee an old man made out of a young player, than repreſented by a really old one; and the greater the diſproportion, the more the merit. If a clown is repreſented, they would have the actor able to put on the rude air, and imitate the untoward manner, but they would not have him poſſeſs it really, any more than they would ſee a drunken character repreſented by a perſon really drunk.

If the character be full of defects, the more the real perfection of the player, the more we admire his imitation of them; but if we are to laugh at the air of a beau aſſumed by a groom, the farther his perſon be from all that is proper to the character, the more we are pleaſed. Here is therefore large ſcope for the manager's employing actors whoſe perſons are bad,

provided they have humour. This, among a number of other inſtances, eaſy to be produced, if they would not as eaſily recur to the reader's memory, proves, that tho' a good figure be eſſential to ſome of the actors of a company, it is not proper for all; and while we are charmed with it in ſome characters, there are others, the ſpirit of which we ſhould never truly taſte, if there were not perſons in the company whoſe figure wanted all theſe advantages.

The ſum of the whole matter is this, an elegant perſon is neceſſary in ſome characters, a bad figure may be uſeful in ſome, but they are few; but altho' deformity will be of advantage in theſe, it will not be borne in others; and finally, in the greater part of the characters of inferior rank, an abſence of charms in the face and figure may be very well diſpenſed with. A company ought to conſiſt of a few perſons of the firſt kind, a very ſmall number of the ſecond, and the generality ſhould be of the third.

As it is in figure, ſo it is alſo in accompliſhments: there is merit in a man's letting himſelf down to a character, when there would be none in another's performing

ing it naturally, who was not by nature at all above it. The folly of Abel Drugger would hang well upon a ſcene-ſhifter, but it is the exaggeration of that folly which charms us; and it is to the placing it in a good light that we owe half the beauty of the exhibition. It is therefore Mr. Garrick, who has more underſtanding than almoſt any man, charms us in the character; and no future generation will ever ſee it in ſuch advantage, unleſs another Garrick, which is not very probable, ſhould riſe to act it.

The advantages of a good figure in general, have been conſidered; but there are particulars relating to it, which ſome poſſeſs who have not others, or have not the whole, and which yet are of vaſt benefit. Among theſe a piercing eye and a countenance formed for expreſſion, may be reckoned as the principal.

Many people have theſe, whoſe face, in general, is far from delicate; and indeed, ſo far as the face goes, beauty is not the eſſential point. Symmetry in the ſhape is one thing, and a good figure off the ſtage, and a good figure on, are the ſame; but there are people very handſome in point of face, who make no great appearance by

their beauty on the ſtage; and there are thoſe who, off it, are far from handſome, that appear very advantageouſly on. This holds good with reſpect to the women, as well as the men; and in general, that may be a very fine ſtage-face, which no body would call beautiful.

It is at a diſtance that a player is ſeen, and there is the advantage of lights in a particular ſituation. Beſide we do not ſee the ſedate face of the player: there are ſome handſome only when compoſed, and indeed theſe are in general, the moſt handſome, their beauty ariſing from a harmony of features: there are others who look beſt when their countenance is put in action. Theſe pleaſe more with the air and manner than the figure of the face, and theſe beſt ſucceed upon the ſtage; for if the player be a good one, we very rarely ſee the face quite compos'd on the ſcene.

In general, features a little larger than a perfect ſymmetry of face would authorize, are thoſe which ſucceed beſt upon the ſtage.

We have examples very ready to ſet this obſervation in the cleareſt light, Mr. Garrick is not handſome; nor did the moſt enthuſiaſtic admirers of Mrs. Cibber ever call

call her a beauty, but both have features large, ſtrong, and formed for marking the paſſions; each has the eye piercing in the greateſt degree; and theſe are the articles that conſtitute the face formed for expreſſion. This is one of the greateſt natural advantages that a player can poſſeſs; and when with this there is a regular figure, all is done that can be to the external part of the performer.

As we may readily diſtinguiſh the perfections or advantages of figure in a player, we as readily ſee the faults of it. A man with ſome little irregularity of ſhape may paſs very well unnoticed in the world; but as ſoon as he comes upon the ſtage we ſee him in a point of view in which he is moſt conſpicuous, and we examine him moſt critically; we ſee not only if any part be amiſs, but if the whole be not of a piece the fault is as eaſily diſtinguiſhed: and we expect a perfection that even a woman of delicacy does not demand in her lover. The player muſt not be fat, nor muſt he be lean; it is an objection if he be too tall, more ſo if he be too ſhort. The laſt is the moſt exceptionable extreme, but either is ſo improper, that unleſs particular merit recommend the perſon, that

ſingle circumſtance ought to exclude him the theatre.

What particular merit can do, we are very well informed, as we have at this time a great player who is much under the common ſize, and another who is ſomething above it. Mr. Garrick is, perhaps, the moſt deficient in ſtature of any man that ever acted an hero, and Mr. Barry looks an unnatural lover for a very ſhort woman; but ſo perfectly are we reconciled to ſuch trifles in the performances of theſe great actors, that we never perceive the ſtature of either to be amiſs in the repreſentations.

But we may recollect circumſtances that will prove all this merit is neceſſary to reconcile an audience to even the better of theſe two extremes. Mr. Johnſon, who acted in ſome of Aaron Hill's plays, under the direction of Mr. Giffard, had an excellent voice, great majeſty in his deportment, and a very fine figure, but enormouſly large. The reſt of the performers ſeemed a Lilliputian army ſurrounding a Gulliver. If he had a quarrel, the people ſided with his antagoniſt, becauſe the other was an over-match for him; and when he made love, Mrs. Giffard ſeemed a Galatea courted by a Polypheme. So much

much care is to be taken to reconcile the common part of an audience to the deluſions of a theatre; and ſo difficult is it to ſucceed with any ſingularity of perſon.

Mr. Barry was indeed little leſs diſproportioned to Mrs. Cibber, than Mr. Johnſon to Mrs. Giffard; yet ſuch is the force of ſuperior merit, that none ever wondered at Eudoſia's loving Phocias; nor did any body conceive there was any thing unnatural in the extravagance of Juliet's paſſion, when this Romeo, with a voice ſweet as the ſhepherd's pipe upon the mountains, tells her the ſtory of his tenderneſs, and awakens an equal paſſion. If the exceſs of ſtature is thus hid by Mr. Barry's excellencies, the want of it, which is a much more diſadvantageous particular, is as perfectly concealed and loſt to us in Mr. Garrick's Lear. When we ſee the little, old, white-haired man enter, with ſpindle-ſhanks, a tottering gait, and great ſhoes upon the little feet, we fancy a Gomez or a Fondlewife: but when he ſpeaks, and enters into the buſineſs of the character, we find him every inch a king; when, under the provocation of his daughters inſolence and ingratitude, we hear him throw out the ſtrong and rapid execration,

Blaſts upon thee,
The enchanted woundings of a father's curſe
Pierce every ſenſe about thee;

we no longer conceive any thing diſadvantageous in the figure; the ſpirit, force, and violence with which theſe terrible words are pronounced, ſpeak dignity in the character: and when we immediately after hear the threat,

No, Gorgon, thou ſhalt find
That I'll reſume the ſhape which thou do'ſt think
I have thrown off for ever,

nobody doubts, from the very tone of majeſty that attends the words, and the greatneſs, as well as fierceneſs of deportment which accompanies them, that this ſtate is that of royalty; nor do we any where, throughout the buſy part of the play loſe one thought from the repreſented character, or beſtow one upon the diſproportioned ſtature of the actor.

Even in Othello, which Mr. Garrick, once attempted, perhaps the diſguſt his audience conceived at his figure, was more owing

owing to the novelty of his habit, and to ſome jokes of a rival actor, than to any thing in his ſtature. Had he contented himſelf to have dreſſed for Othello, as he does for Macbeth (and whether that be right or no cuſtom authorizes it) he would certainly have eſcaped all the little raillery which wounded him ſo deeply on this occaſion.

I can remember, that in the ſcenes where the great general is moſt himſelf, none ever filled the ſtage with more dignity; and that when he took leave of his occupation,

Farewel the plumed troop, and the big war
That make ambition virtue. O farewel,
The ſpirit-ſtirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumſtance of glorious war.

None ever felt the ſentiment more nobly. The honour of his profeſſion, and the grief at quitting it, were ſo perfectly expreſſed together, that it was impoſſible to ſay which moſt expreſſed the hero.

CHAP. IX.

Concerning the players who are intruſted only with ſubordinate characters.

IF we talk with the great people of a theatre, of whatever ſex, and in whatever light they ſhine, we ſhall find them perſuaded, that nothing is ſo excellent as that peculiar caſt in which they excel. Mr. Garrick will ſuppoſe fire the only eſſential part of a great player's character; Mr. Barry, tenderneſs; Mrs. Cibber, diſtreſsful looks, and articulate melancholy; and Mrs. Pritchard, univerſal feeling. Mr. Woodward will tell you, that an air and *jene ſcay quoy*, or negligent aſſurance, is the whole matter; and Mrs. Clive, that ſmartneſs carries all before it. Theſe laſt will ſay, that comedy is the excellence of acting, while the others wonder at audiences being pleaſed with what they ſee, as nothing more than farce under another name. Thus will they give their ſentiments; but there is all the time another ſet of players, who lay the account of their ſuc-

ſucceſs quite to another cauſe. Theſe are a very numerous body; they are all the under players. Aſk theſe to what the preſent ſet of great players owe their reputation, and they will anſwer, it is to the fortune of having all the good parts. In theſe, they ſay, they have opportunities of diſplaying talents which the others poſſeſs in vain; and I have heard a man of ſenſe, of this claſs, affirm, that the only difference he ſaw between Mr. Garrick and Mr. Marr, in the Fair Penitent, was, that one had the character of Lothario, and the other of Roſſano.

In this they err, even to contempt. Certainly the man who has talents will ſhew them in the leaſt character; and he who has not, will only be more expoſed, the more he repreſents a greater. Perhaps it would be better if ſome of the ſhorter parts in certain plays were repreſented by abler perſons; but they eſteem length and dignity of a part as the ſame thing; and tho' a man able to excel is idle, he will not condeſcend to accept of a part amounting only to a ſide and an half, tho' it belong to an hero. To this we owe the Weſtmorelands and Norfolks of our hiſtorical plays

being generally ſo contemptibly performed. Men who are fit for boors, ſervants, or bailiffs followers, repreſent to us peers or warriors, not becauſe they ſay or do any thing unbecoming that character; but becauſe they do not ſay or do enough.

This is a blemiſh on the theatre, and it reflects no honour upon the managers, who have in their company thoſe who might repreſent them properly; but while it has this diſadvantage to the audience, it carries with it this good to the ſubordinate player, that it gives him opportunities of diſplaying his talents, if he have any, and of arriving by due ſtages at thoſe parts which become the greateſt actor, and which he ſuppoſes make him. He may be aſſured Shakeſpear never put into the mouth of a duke ſentiments unworthy of his quality; nor are they to imagine that an audience will over-look the meaneſt player, if he ſpeak them properly.

On the contrary, people will be glad to raiſe neglected merit from the obſcurity; it is before Britons that they play, and they may be aſſured of every act of generoſity. We need not be at a loſs for inſtances of it. When Othello was ſome years ſince acted at the Haymarket for Mr. Macklin (Mr. Foote was the Othello) there

there was a perſon who had underſtanding and ſenſibility put into the character of Montano; I do not know whether he would chuſe to have his name commemorated for it, ſince he is now better provided for: but the applauſe he received for a dozen lines, to which nobody had ever paid any attention before, ought to be a leſſon for ever to thoſe who ſuppoſe they only want great characters to ſhew their parts.

Montano does not ſpeak above a dozen lines, and accordingly quantity and conſequence being the ſame thing in the opinion of moſt managers, as well as moſt players, Montano is always acted by ſome inconſiderable perſon. This gentleman had played before in great characters: perhaps he had gone thro' all the Othellos, Bajazets, and Lord Townleys of the theatre, upon ſome little ſtage unregarded, unleſs to laugh at him; but when Othello aſked of him the cauſe of that quarrel in which he had been wounded by his officer, he replied with that decency and air of nature, which the inſtruction of ſo good a tutor had given him, in the place of the common cant of tragedy,

Worthy

Worthy Othello, I am hurt to danger;
Your officer Iago can inform you,
While I ſpare ſpeech (which ſomewhat now offends me)
Of all that I do know. Nor know I ought
By me that's ſaid or done amiſs this night,
Unleſs ſelf-charity be ſometimes ſin,
And to defend our ſelves it be a crime
When violence aſſails us.

The audience and the player were at once ſurprized. They to hear a ſentence pronounced ſenſibly, which had always been murdered to them before, and he at the ſound of their applauſe, the firſt he had received, tho' many years in ſome ſort a player.

This may ſtand as an inſtance how uſeful talents may be to him who plays the very ſlighteſt character; how ready an audience will be to acknowledge them, and how certain the applauſe. But it will prove much more: the conſequences will ſhew that great characters do not make great players; on the contrary, that there are talents ſuited to every occaſion of the theatre.

The manager of one of the houſes received this gentleman into his ſervice, he ſaw

ſaw his merit, but not having conſidered enough the nature of his profeſſion, he did not diſcover on what particular qualities it depended. The ſpeech was a temperate one, and required no ſpirit. The actor, who obtained applauſe by delivering it, had underſtanding and ſenſibility; theſe were all that were neceſſary to it, and therefore he obtained applauſe in it; but with theſe he had no fire, a requiſite as unavoidably neceſſary to a great player as any of the others. Indeed it is that which particularly characterizes the great from the ſubordinate player: for decency alone is required, in moſt caſes, in the latter; but in the former, who repreſents characters of dignity and eminence, always fire.

The manager ſaw not the defect, but the audience found it; the player loſt in ſuperior characters all the fame he had acquired in theſe little ones; and would have been reduced to a Montano and Roſſano again, had he remained in the houſe. One would think it ſelf-evident, if we did not ſee theſe people blind to it, that leſs talents are required to little characters than to great ones; and that the very part which makes a good actor the object of our admiration, muſt expoſe in the ſame de-

degree a bad one to our contempt. Of this let them be certain, it is better to be applauded in a livery, than be laughed at in embroidery.

The players of great characters often would ſerve as foils to thoſe who acted little ones, had the laſt the diſcretion to mind their buſineſs. The others often neglect it, and their rank makes their faults the more conſpicuous, and would ſet the decency of the others in a fine light, in the oppoſition to their affectation. I have ſeen Mr. Garrick, in ſome of the leſs important ſcenes of Macbeth, beſtow an attention upon the buttons of his coat, which gave the humble attendant an opportunity of ſhining by a decent conduct; and Mrs. Barrington, when ſhe played the Cephiſa to Mrs. Woffington's Andromache, deſerved a thouſand times the applauſe of her miſtreſs. A decent diſtreſs ran thro' all her deportment, but the widow was in more pain about the ſetting of her ruffle than the death of Aſtyanax, or the ghoſt of Hector. Nor was this the only ſource of her inattention. When ſhe talked of ſeeing Andromache in Pyrhus's arms, inſtead of the horror the poet meant ſhould be expreſſed at the thought, there was a ſmirk upon the countenance,

which

which ſhewed, that whatever Hector's widow might think, it did not appear to Mrs. Woffington there was any thing ſo terrible in the matter; and while Mrs. Barrington, with all the tenderneſs and terror that a ſenſible actreſs could feel from her poet, intreated her miſtreſs,

For heaven's ſake, madam, let me know your griefs.
——I cannot gueſs the drift your thoughts purſue.

and,

O madam, explain theſe riddles to my boding heart,

The well-dreſſed queen anſwered by communicating the reſolution of her death, with that ſort of interrupted attention which a little girl would have diſcovered in repeating her leſſon, when ſhe thought ſome who were preſent admired her eyes more than her memory.

All this time Mrs. Woffington is an excellent performer; her comedy characters, which are all of the firſt claſs, were never ſo well performed ſince the death of Mrs. Oldfield; and her Hermione, was an inſtance that there was ſcarce any thing ſhe could not do in tragedy. The inſtance

was

was not produced to condemn her, but to put inferior players in mind, that they may often profit by the faults of the greater.

As to the advantage a good player has from a firſt-rate character, there is no diſputing that it is very great: but let the others know, it is only as he is great, he has from it this advantage. I ſhould not be of the opinion of thoſe who imagine that voice and memory are all the requiſites to a ſubordinate player; on the contrary, I think many more required, nay, the infancy, if it may be ſo called, of all; for the beſt way of arriving at the top of the profeſſion, would be to riſe from the loweſt ſcene of it. Perhaps, indeed, the audience would be ſlow in raiſing the perſon who ſhould ſet out upon this plan, but the effect would be ſure. We have ſeen Mr. Quin raiſed from the Lieutenant of the Tower, to the greateſt characters among the male, and Mrs. Pritchard from the waiting-maid of a farce, to the beſt of the female. Let them not bluſh at the recollection. The general raiſed from the condition of a common ſoldier, by his merit in the field, was never had in leſs honour, than he whoſe father purchaſed the firſt employments: nor will he who remembers

the

the Zanga and Ventidius of Mr. Quin, much more his Falſtaff, think it a reproach to him, that he began with leſs parts; nor any who ſee the Phædra of Mrs. Prichard recollect, without pleaſure, the having had ſome ſhare in raiſing her from the meaneſt characters.

But we may go farther, I can recollect our having ſeen all that merit in Mrs. Pritchard, thro' the diſguiſe of little characters, which afterwards diſcloſed itſelf in Roſalind; and can remember the audience beſtowing their curſes on the managers for not giving that good actreſs a better gown. As to Mr. Quin he very early ſhewed, in little characters, that excellence in comedy, which, at length, in his Falſtaff, excelled all we have ſeen; and he was always praiſed for it. Upon the whole, a fine coat is not the characteriſtic of a good actor to the judicious part of an audience. We reſpect the manner in which a character is executed, more than the dignity of that character, or the quantity of words the author has put into his mouth: as in painting we admire the hand of the artiſt in the peaſant that is well drawn, while we deſpiſe the daubery of a king.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Of the time of life at which performers ſhould quit the ſtage.

ALL human qualifications are given but for a time, and the player is not to ſuppoſe that he is exempt from the common lot. We who have ſeen a Swift decayed, cannot ſuppoſe that any perfections of the mind will laſt for ever; nor need inſtances be given to prove, that thoſe of the body are leſs permanent.

Nature and reaſon join to preſcribe ſome certain time for quitting the buſineſs of a theatre. This muſt be appropriated to the faculties and conſtitutions of the ſeveral perſons, but ſtill there is ſuch a time. People in many ſtations keep their poſt too long, thro' an idle fondneſs or a weak ambition: perhaps the players are not exempt from theſe, but there is another reaſon which is much ſtronger, and compels them to it, neceſſity. Of all people who have had the means of living genteelly in their youth, theſe are the only ones who have no proviſion for their

their age. It is a reproach to the memory of that Allen, who left proviſion for certain perſons who ſhould chance to be of his own name, that he did not direct the charity to thoſe who ſhould chance to be of his profeſſion. What a folly to have the perſons entitled by certain letters of the alphabet, to that donation, which he ſaw ſo much wanted, and which he ſaw no proſpect of any other charity ſupplying.

What was a reproach to this ſingle perſon, is not leſs to the nation. The players deſerve of us more than many other ſets of people, and none are ſo perfectly neglected. Men and women who have devoted to our entertainment talents which would have raiſed them to ſomething in any other road of life, are left to ſtarve, when by the very decays of nature they are rendered incapable, at once, of providing for themſelves, and of entertaining us any longer. Their number is ſmall; and the proviſion would be eaſy.

But if the age, in general, is to be blamed for having neglected this, the players themſelves are yet more blameable. The managers often have been, or are themſelves actors: if they are above feeling the misfortune, they have not always been

been above the terror of it; and it would be eaſy by giving now and then a night, perhaps two or three, at the moſt, in a ſeaſon, to raiſe a fund that ſhould be ſufficient.

There is no arguing againſt neceſſity; but certainly if there were any proviſion made for them when they had quitted it, there is a time when all players ought to quit the ſtage. Abſolute youth is no more neceſſary to every performer, than abſolute beauty: nay, perhaps, it is not eſſential; for by the advantage of colour and dreſs, we ſee forty, nay, if I am not miſtaken, fifty, play the youth with tolerable ſucceſs. But tho' the bloom of youth may be ſpared, the decay of age cannot be tolerated. There are ſome characters in which a repreſentation of old age is neceſſary, but even in theſe, it is better that it ſhould be a pretended than a real age we ſee. The ſtage is the ſcene of repreſentations, not realities. Mr. Foote pleaſes more in a Fondlewife, than an old man poſſibly could: and the reaſon is evident, we wiſh to ſee the character of a ridiculous, not of a pityable old fellow. We expect to be entertained with the follies of age, not to be diſguſted with its infirmities. The poet can ſeparate theſe perfectly in the cha-

character that he draws, and when a performer of the real judgment, and of the true humour of him who at this time entertains the town with it, is to repreſent it, he alſo can ſeparate all that is contemptible, from what is the object of compaſſion, and ſhew it ſingly.

If old men are very ill bore with, upon the ſtage, old women are leſs to be ſupported. Infirmities come upon that tender ſex much more early, and they are much more obvious than in ours. Theſe we can never ſee without concern; and this is a ſenſation which we never ſhould feel, nor ever intended to feel at a playhouſe, except for the repreſented character. We cannot laugh at the ſcene while we ſee the player decayed, and recollect, that being human creatures, the ſame decay muſt ſome time happen to us: nor can we give a perfect attention in tragedy, to the diſtreſs of the play, while a diſtreſſed actor is before us.

There are decays of nature which have nothing diſtaſteful to the ſight, and theſe we ſee the actor mimic upon the ſtage; and the author intends he ſhould: but to be given us pure and unmixed, they muſt be only imitated: for in the reality they are, and muſt be, mixed with thoſe things

which

which diſguſt us. Thus a feeble voice, a tottering gait, grey hairs, and even a cough, may be mimicked upon the ſtage: but we are not to ſee them in the reality, becauſe with theſe nature converts loſs of teeth, diſorders of ſeveral kinds that give us pain, and even decay of memory, with which the profeſſion of an actor is incompatible.

For theſe, and many other reaſons, affected old age is very pleaſing on the ſcene, but real cannot be borne: it is evident therefore, that men at a certain time of life ſhould quit the ſtage, and women earlier. It is fit the publick, whom they have grown old in ſerving, ſhould give them means of doing this with decency.

There are many ſcenes in which the raillery falls upon an affectation of youth, or an attachment to the pleaſures which belong to it, at a time of life when it is gone; theſe are beſt repreſented by actors paſt the bloom of life, but they ought not to be entered on the decay of it: if that be intended by the author, it ſhould be affected, not real.

Altho' theſe characters become a middle age of life, there are others which are compatible only with its full bloom. Theſe are

are all in comedy. In tragedy we ſee even the youngeſt characters repreſented decently and finely by perſons much advanced in life. The favourite Juliet, ſhe who is deſervedly ſo, of the preſent theatre, might certainly, in point of real age, be very well the mother of the character. But this does not ſucceed ſo well in the moſt favourable comedy; and in ſome characters is not to be endured. We ſee ſome of them now repreſented by a perſon of great merit: but who had better quit them while it is time, than be pitied in them this ſeaſon, and laughed out of them the next. Age is no reproach, but the affectation of perſonating youth and beauty where there is neither, is too provoking. So much need not have been ſaid on this ſubject, were there not characters enough in which it is poſſible to ſhine long after theſe are quitted.

People bear thoſe longeſt upon the ſtage who have pleaſed moſt; but the defects, and infirmities of human nature always will give them pain. If neceſſity preſs the actor to continue, when even all his faculties are loſt, the ſame humanity which influences the manager to receive him into pay, will plead with the audience alſo to bear with him: but in an actreſs, even when com-

paſſion, and a remembrace of paſt ſervices plead together, it is yet more difficult. If it be hard to accept the ſuperannuated player, when there are theſe motives to induce us, where they are wanting, it will be impoſſible. Intereſted views, or a fooliſh ambition, prompt many to continue upon the ſtage in the decline of life; and when the one of theſe is the caſe they will be deſpiſed, when the other is laughed at.

The oldeſt actors we have ſeen were Johnſon and Bowman; the firſt, at one time of his life a very conſiderable player, the other never above the middle rank. Neceſſity compelled both theſe to continue in their profeſſion; and the one was applauded, the other tolerated to the end. Nay, there were paſſages in which the toothleſs Bowman had the art of commanding attention. When in the Spaniſh Fryar, the good old courtier deſcribed in the ſtate of Arragon,

A council made of ſuch as could not ſpeak,
And dar'd not, if they could. A miniſtry
Whence honeſt men
Baniſh'd themſelves for ſhame of being
there,

A ge-

A government, which knowing no true greatneſs,
Was ſcorn'd abroad, and liv'd on tricks at home.

There was a ſpirit in his manner of delivering the lines that always commanded an applauſe: but it muſt be obſerved of Johnſon, that in his latter years he was very little himſelf; and as to this applauſe beſtowed upon Bowman, it was almoſt ſingly in this paſſage that he obtained it. The ſame motive that gave him the ſpirit to pronounce the lines ſo particularly, perhaps occaſioned alſo the applauſe; for it can live in the pit, as well as on the ſtage; and ſomething unconnected with the player, promoted the noiſe. What were the old man's ſentiments on theſe ſubjects, I can gueſs from a particular incident. Many people had tickets ſent for the Orphan, to be acted in the midſt of ſummer; no players names were mentioned, nor was any money taken. I had one of theſe from a perſon who had received half a dozen. The company all ſtared at one another, till the old man whom Bowman acted came forward on the ſtage, and with a ſpirit exactly the ſame with that which obtained him the applauſe in Raymond, ſpoke,

It is the birth-day of my royal maſter.

The company then recollected that it was the tenth of June, and half of us left the place: the reſt, with a redoubled applauſe called for the line again and again, and players and company paſſed the evening together.

It has been obſerved, that actors who have been excellent in their prime, are to be ſuffered on the ſtage, if the neceſſity of their affairs require it, longer than others; but there muſt be this caution obſerved, even by them, that they do not thruſt themſelves upon us in characters unfit for them: in this, they will, in ſpite of all their former merit, be contemptible, and every female of taſte, will with Prior's lady,

Pity Betterton in age,
That ridicules the god-like rage.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Concerning the peculiar qualifications neceſſary to the principal performers.

IT has been obſerved, that more and greater talents are neceſſary to the player's acquitting himſelf well, in a capital character, than he needs to poſſeſs, who is only employed to perform in the ſubordinate ones. It is not only that a greater perfection is required of him in thoſe things which all actors muſt have in common, ſuch as underſtanding and ſenſibility, but there are certain requiſites beſides, which to the others are not at all neceſſary, but to him who is to be the hero and the lover are indiſpenſible.

That ſpirit, which is uſually expreſſed by the term, *fire*, in the player, is neceſſary, in a great degree, to the ſuperior player; and in moſt caſes a much leſs quantity of it will do for the inferior; in ſome ſcarce any of it is required: but there are certain other requiſites to the great player, which the others are often entirely without, and yet paſs uncenſured.

A better figure and more general knowledge, is required of the ſuperior, than in the inferior players, and politeneſs of addreſs and elevation of mind are expected in theſe; not at all, or in a very moderate degree in the others.

Of theſe qualifications, peculiar to the firſt rate players, ſome are interior, ſome exterior. It may be worth while to conſider them, not together, in one chapter, but diſtinctly in ſeveral.

CHAP. XII.

Concerning that gaiety of diſpoſition, which is eſſential to the comic actor.

I Am here to ſpeak of a qualification to the actor, which many may think quite unconnected with his profeſſion: his natural temper appearing to them a thing he is always to diſſemble and conceal, in order to his aſſuming that of his character. But this is not altogether the truth, in reſpect to ſome kinds of temper; they are in vain drawn by the poet, if he who is to repreſent the characters does not himſelf poſſeſs them. Of theſe, gaiety of diſpoſition

poſition is one. We ſee an inſtance of the truth of this in the character of Sir Harry Wildair. The ſtage, at preſent, affords no actor who has this gaiety, connected with the addreſs and manner of a gentleman; and therefore we have not ſeen it acted tolerably, nay, ſcarce attempted, except by a woman.

Characters of politeneſs are as difficultly repreſented as thoſe of gaiety, becauſe, unleſs the actor be himſelf polite, he can no more come up to the intent of the author, or the expectations of the audience in them, than he can to that of the one or the other, in thoſe of which the characteriſtic is gaiety, unleſs himſelf is naturally gay. Theſe characters make a very eſſential part of all comedy; and indeed ſome are for making them the whole of it: they are for baniſhing the parts of footmen and clowns to farce, ſuppoſing that a polite audience cannot be entertained with the abſurdities of people ſo much beneath them. It is poſſible that good comedies may be written without theſe characters: but we find the beſt poets of our own and other nations introducing them. However, ſtill the principal attention is to be paid to the higheſt characters, and it will uſually be the lot of the beſt players to perform them.

Theſe are of different kinds, and in the choice of them, provided that choice is left to the player himſelf, is ſhewn his greateſt judgment; and on that choice depends his greateſt ſucceſs. Altho' a natural diſpoſition alone will not enable a man to play a part of the ſame turn, (for we have ſeen real fops in life make miſerable ones on the ſtage) yet it is the moſt happy addition that can be made to real talents. He who is able to act all characters decently, will be ſure to excel in thoſe which expreſs his own turn of mind. It is ſaid no man ever wrote well upon a ſubject, who did not feel ſomething of the character in himſelf: it is not true, that no man ever acted a part well, who was not in ſome degree, of the ſame turn in his own mind; yet it is certain, that no actor has ever played thoſe parts in comedy which affect us moſt, ſo well as thoſe who have been like them in reality. Mr. Cibber, the beſt lord Foppington who ever appeared, was in real life (with all due reſpect be it ſpoken by one who loves him) ſomething of the coxcomb; and the reaſon why Mr. Woodward ſucceeds leſs in them, is, that he has not in real life the true character.

In

In general, people who have naturally exalted ſentiments are the fitteſt for playing tragedy; and that ſort of diſpoſition which will fit the comic actor beſt for his buſineſs, is, what we call ſprightly and joyous. This will diffuſe itſelf thro' his whole manner, and will give what the poet always means to convey, tho' often in vain, to the player, and thro' him to the audience.

As the tragic performer ſhould, as much as poſſible, diveſt himſelf of all paſſions in private life, ſo ſhould, nay ſo muſt, in a yet more perfect manner, he who would excel in comedy. The deſire of applauſe ought to be the only paſſion allowed to him, beſide thoſe immediately connected with his part. As he has the more of this deſire, he will obtain more of this applauſe, and the applauſe itſelf will not only encreaſe the deſire; (for in that, fame is like gold, the deſire of more encreaſes with the quantity;) but this very incident will give him more of that joyous ſpirit, which is ſo happy in comedy, than all other things.

If there be any thing in the player's private affairs that troubles him, he muſt quite throw it off for the time, if he would reaſonably hope for any applauſe. The fullneſs or the emptineſs of the houſe muſt

not be ſuffered to affect him; for if it be empty, is it not to his credit to play ſo, that thoſe who are preſent ſhall ſay, it ought to have been fuller? A manager is more likely to be affected by this circumſtance than one who only plays: but of this we can have no inſtance. The only manager who acts at preſent, fills houſes by his appearance.

We do ſee actors affected by the emptineſs of an houſe, but they are always the worſt; for they have leaſt underſtanding. A Lear ſhall play as carefully to an hundred people, as if there were two thouſand; but the majeſty of an Albany or a Cornwall ſhall be offended at it beyond meaſure; they ſhall inſult the people who are preſent by their indolence, and take ſnuff, or talk of their beer-engagements in the moſt intereſting ſcenes. We have ſeen this, but thoſe who ſaw it have ſo reſented it, that probably we ſhall not ſee it any more.

As, in order to our being properly affected by tragedy, the player is to feel the diſtreſs, and to be himſelf melancholy, ſo we never reliſh comedy truly, unleſs the player is pleaſing himſelf as well as us in the performance; and this will never happen, unleſs he have a natural turn to gaie-

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ty and ſprightlineſs; in ſuch a man it is nature, and we are therefore pleaſed to the height. It was for want of this that the comic characters of the late Mr. Delane, tho' he acted very juſtly, never perfectly pleaſed us: and it is owing to the full perfection of it that we are often ſo delighted with the comedy of Mr. Woodward. While he he acts the character called the Fine Gentleman, in Lethe, he gives us a reality, not a repreſentation. We ſee that in damning the audience for a parcel of raſcals and ſcoundrels, he delivers his very ſentiments, and laughs at them for being pleaſed with it: here he is perfect nature; and in his Bobadil, and ſome other characters of that kind, it is eaſy to ſee that he is entertaining himſelf as much as his audience.

This ſenſe of pleaſantry, and thorough reliſh of the ſpirit and joy of the poet in his own breaſt, is the true inſpiring deity, the Phœbus of the comic player: he cannot encourage it too much in himſelf, nor give his audience too frequent or too ſtrong inſtances of it: but let him all this time underſtand the admonition rightly. His pleaſure is to be that of the perſon who tranſacts the ſcene of jollity, not that of ſome idle perſon who looks upon it: we

are to ſee it expreſſed in the vivacity, life, and fire of his air, and the ſpirit with which he goes through every part, not by the ſimper on his countenance. This is an error too many have made in the comic ſcene, eſpecially women; but they ſhould be informed nothing is ſo abſurd or diſguſting. Have they not ſeen that the pleaſantry of a jeſt in common converſation is loſt, when the perſon who ſpeaks laughs at it himſelf. Much more is it on the ſtage, where the actor is not telling a ſtory, as is commonly the circumſtance in the other caſe, but is perſonating one of the characters.

It is ſaid, the merry fellows are the ſaddeſt fellows in the world; it is no where ſo true as in comic actors. We ſee in tragedy ſome ſo charmed with the thought of repreſenting an hero, that they will ſmile throughout the part of a Cato or a Bajazet; and we have ſeen men ſo conſcious of the importance of acting any thing of length, that they have looked as grave as if upon the bench, through the whole of a Scandal or a Heartfree. Theſe are abſurdities ſufficiently glaring: but the other, of conſtant merriment of face, is as diſguſtful. People of grave countenances do not play comedy naturally,

ly, therefore never well; for all that is right in them is forced, and being ſo, it cannot pleaſe: but to be a perfect comic player, a man muſt have all this natural gaiety of diſpoſition, and know how to ſuppreſs it. There is an admirable grimace in what we know to be the forced gravity of a countenance; and in general, the tragedy rule is to be inverted, in order to ſucceeding in comedy. The one muſt weep himſelf, if he would make his audience weep; the other, if he would make them laugh forever, muſt commonly check and curb his own merriment.

This diſguiſe of the thought is often a great merit; and often an artful inattention has the ſame charm. Many things in comedy ſtrike us greatly, as they drop inattentively from the character. The author intends to expreſs them thus; and if the actor, out of his great diſcernment, will chuſe to look wiſe, and ſee the conſequences, he takes off the whole joke. A ſmile of cunning deſtroys all here, and ſo does a ſmile of applauſe in many other paſſages. To ſucceed perfectly, the player muſt diſguiſe to his audience, in a proper degree, his intent of raiſing a laugh, and his expectation of doing it. Thus we ſee that gaiety of ſpirit is the great advantage

tage of the comic player, but that it will not have half its effect, if he does not know how to regulate it. It is like all other good things, the worſt of all, when out of its place, luxuriant, or indulged too fondly.

CHAP. XIII.

Of greatneſs of ſoul as neceſſary to the acting the character of an hero.

THAT which a natural pleaſantry is to the comedian, elevation of mind is to him who is to act in the principal parts of tragedy. Each is the proper foundation of all excellence in its way: and each is to be had from nature, but muſt be encouraged and improved by art.

It has been obſerved, that only great men are capable of ſaying great things; and is equally true, that thoſe only who have great and elevated ſouls, are capable of repeating them worthily. Longinus produces, as an inſtance of the firſt aſſertion, the reply of the conqueror of the world to one of his courtiers. Darius, ſays he, had offered to Alexander half Aſia, in dowry

dowry with his daughter in marriage. I would accept the conditions, was I you, ſaid Parmenio. And ſo ſhould I, replied the hero, were I Parmenio. The critic obſerves, that none but a ſoul great and elevated, like that of Alexander, could have been capable of making ſuch an anſwer: and I ſhall add to the preſent purpoſe, that no actor who had not alſo a ſoul capable of the greateſt ſentiments, could give the proper weight and dignity to that anſwer. In worſe hands it might be degraded into a jeſt, but pronounced by a Garrick, it would convey to the meaneſt of the audience a ſenſe of that ſuperiority which Alexander had over other men, never to be eradicated.

The ſame admirable writer has obſerved, that the firſt qualification of an orator is, that he muſt not have a mean and groveling ſpirit: and we may ſay the ſame of the tragic actor, ſince it is as impoſſible that he whoſe ſoul is mean, and whoſe ſentiments are low, ſhould repreſent the dignity of mind, and grandeur of thought, of men whoſe characters aſtoniſh an admiring world, as that ſuch a man ſhould produce from himſelf noble thoughts. The actor who intends to riſe to fame, ſhould be, as that great writer deſcribes the genius qualified

lified for the ſublime, a mirror repreſenting a great ſoul. An unaſſuming ſenſe of importance, a dignity too great for pride muſt accompany all his geſtures, and the ſame idea, tho' it cannot in this caſe be deſcribed, muſt blend itſelf in the delivery of every word. We muſt be ſenſible that he is in all things above the reſt of mankind, while all he conceives is, that it is the dignity of human nature he is ſupporting.

The player who can perfectly enter into this conception, who with an underſtanding to comprehend the deſcription, (for language is inſufficient to make it perfect) feels a warmth and nobleneſs of heart that burns to expreſs it; will, by encouraging and improving himſelf in it, find it at length a continued fire, warming his whole action and deportment, not a flaſh burſting out upon ſome gaudy occaſion, and dying in a moment: and by preſerving this uniform magnanimity, for it is the ſame in all heroes, only to be adapted to their ſeveral characters and circumſtances, he will be not only great in certain paſſages, as copyiſts and imitators are, but equal throughout, and great in every part: he will have the praiſe of doing his author juſtice every where, and very

very often the yet greater praiſe of ſupporting the character where he has ſuffered it to ſink. This is eaſy; for often the manner is more than the words; and a look ſhall communicate dignity to a common ſentiment.

It would be well that the tragic actor preſerved to himſelf this kind of dignity in his ordinary thoughts: but it would be cruel to adviſe him to this, and not at the ſame time caution him, that it never eſcape into his external deportment or converſation. Nothing is ſo contemptible as the character of a player, who cannot throw off his grandeur with his buſkins, but ſees his friends as if he were giving an audience of ſtate; or commands the coffee-boy with the air of a Roman general. There are people of this ſtamp, who carry the idea ſo far as to ſuppoſe the repreſenting a great character, a more perfect thing than being it; and who would tell us, if they durſt, that it is eaſier to be an hero, than to act one. Even this turn of mind, contemptible as it renders them in common life, is uſeful to them on the ſtage. Thoſe who have accuſtomed themſelves to play the kings and heroes in their families, will do it better on the theatre, than ſuch as take it up for an hour only, and lay

it down again. This, however, as it is a folly, not a judicious road to perfection in playing, is fit only for thoſe who uſe it, the lower players; and all that it can do, is to affect their exterior figure and deportment: for a folly like this, can give no merit to the delivery of a ſentiment which ſuch cannot conceive.

Let us leave theſe to the contempt they will receive; but let us warn the player who is to repreſent heroes and kings to us, that nothing is ſo like true greatneſs as falſe; and that bombaſt wears ſo much the garb of real dignity, that only a good underſtanding is able to diſtinguiſh them. The greateſt men are not the moſt oſtentatious and lofty in common affairs, but the moſt plain and humble; and knowing this to be their common character we reverence them the more, when they, on a worthy occaſion, diſcloſe the other. In the ſame manner, when the player entertains the ſublimeſt ſentiments in his mind, let his deportment in common life be ſimple and decent; for we ſee there is a dignity in plainneſs and humility: we ſhall reſpect him the more when we ſee the greatneſs of his deportment in his characters. We ſhall perceive that it is not the man himſelf who acts,

brought

brought upon the ſtage, but it is, as it ſhould be, the author's character. What Shakeſpear puts into the mouth of his favoured hero, may be a leſſon to the player of the difference between his deportment on and off the ſtage:

In peace there's nothing ſo becomes a man
As mild behaviour and humility:
But when the breath of war blows in our ears,
Let us be tygers in our fierce deportment.

An hero in the time of peace, and an hero arming for the defence of his invaded country, are not characters more diſtinct than Mr. Barry in his houſe, and Mr. Barry in a Bajazet.

An elevated manner may be acquired by the falſe greatneſs or bombaſt of life, and by ſuch means a man may have perhaps arrived at that gait and ſtep with which Mr. Booth, capable of higher praiſe, aſcended the throne in Pyrrhus; but it muſt be this ſenſe of what is true dignity, and this innate elevation of ſoul alone, which could inſpire Mr. Garrick, in pronouncing many of thoſe paſſages, which ſhew Richard as great as he is cruel.

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The profeſſion of an actor deſerves to be held in ſome eſtimation; and it is to our advantage they ſhould think more of it than they can, with juſtice, who live by it; they will take the more pains to excel in what they think ſo noble.

This may ſerve little minds, but the great player is to be raiſed to his ſummit of perfection by a very different ſentiment. This elevation of ſoul is the only thing that can carry him to it; and he will know that he is poſſeſſed of this, if he feel in himſelf a ſort of pleaſure riſing to enthuſiaſm at every thing that bears the true character of greatneſs. This is the true characteriſtic which diſtinguiſhes the great from the common actor; and it is by this that men like thoſe who do, and who have filled the greateſt characters, create in the minds of their audience, even in the loweſt of them, ſentiments they did not before know, or even ſuppoſe themſelves capable of feeling.

This power of communicating ſentiments of greatneſs, and lifting us up, as it were, above ourſelves, is the prerogative of the great actors in tragedy; they not only convey all the dignity the author meant to give, but more; and raiſe in us thoughts as we hear them, what would never

ver have ariſen as we read the play in our cloſets.

And do the Grecian chiefs, renown'd in war,
A race of heroes, join in cloſe debate,
To plot an infant's death!

ſays Pyrrhus to Oreſtes; and as we read it, we ſee the ſting of the reproach; but as we ſaw it, it was much more. Mr. Quin, for it has not been well acted in our time by any other, communicated with the reproof an air of dignity to the ſentiment by his manner, which was peculiar to himſelf, and ſet him very far above thoſe chiefs of Greece whom he reproaches.

The language of Milton, the moſt ſublime of any in our tongue, ſeemed formed for the mouth of this player, and he did juſtice to the ſentiments, which in that author are always equal to the language. If he was an hero in Pyrrhus, he was, as it became him, in Comus, a demi-god. Mr. Quin was old when he performed this part, and his natural manner grave: he was therefore unfit in common things, for a youthful God of revels, yet did he command our attention and applauſe in the part, in ſpite of theſe, and all his other diſadvantages.

diſadvantages. In the place of youth he had dignity, and for vivacity he gave us grandeur. The author had connected them in the character; and whatever young and ſpirited player ſhall attempt it after him, we ſhall remember his manner, faulty as it was, in what he could not help, in what nature, not want of judgment, miſrepreſented it, ſo as to ſet the other in contempt.

The very language of Milton gives an air of dignity to the ſpeaker; but we have ſeen that where there is not a dignity of manner, and force and elevation to ſupport it, it is a diſadvantage. We have ſeen the trial, and we have ſeen that a feeble actor, in a piece of Milton's, is, as a low player in a principal character, not ſupported, as he might ſuppoſe, by it, but left in the unequal greatneſs, and all his imperfections ſhown doubly.

We hear of the force which thoſe great orations of Demoſthenes received from his manner in pronouncing them; and we affect to wonder at it. Let us bluſh when we turn our eyes upon the ſtage. If we remember the language of Milton in this actor's mouth, we muſt be ſenſible of all they ſay, when we compare its effects with that of a common reading:

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but we need not go back to this for an example: the fire of Lear, as given us by Mr. Garrick, or the tenderneſs of Romeo, as animated by Mr. Barry, have all the advantage over the ſame beauties barely read, tho' read well, that the great oration pronounced by its author, had over the ſame piece, read by his vanquiſhed antagoniſt. We admire theſe things when they are read, but we feel enthuſiaſm and rapture when we hear them on the ſtage. The oration, as read by Æſchines, received applauſe; but pronounced by Demoſthenes himſelf, it had baniſhed the repeater.

CHAP. XIV.

Of tenderneſs, that ſpecies of ſenſibility which is neceſſary to love-characters.

THE actor often plays the king, but when he is excellent in his profeſſion, and his peculiar ſtrength lies in expreſſing the tender paſſions, he is more a ſovereign than any whom he repreſents. The utmoſt of their pretenſions is but to rule the bodies of their ſubjects; but he who has this power, commands the heart and ſoul. The

greateſt

greateſt prince that ever reigned, could never command a tear, and be obeyed; but the player who has ſenſibility to underſtand, and to feel what he is to repreſent, does this at his pleaſure. By working up his own imagination to the ſcene he is to play, he commands alſo ours, and we are affected with him: not equally, but more ſtrongly. The contagion is like that of many diſeaſes, which ſhew themſelves more powerfully in thoſe who receive them, than in the perſon who has communicated the infection.

Of all the paſſions, that tender ſorrow which attends upon unſucceſsful love, has the greateſt power over the human mind. We are all born with the ſeeds of this paſſion; and we all ſympathize with thoſe who ſuffer by it. No other has this effect. We ſee a man furious, and we do not become angry; tranſported with joy, and we are nothing the merrier; but we never ſee a ſorrow of this kind without adopting a part of it. We are not concerned in the occaſion of one's anger, or the other's tranſport; but we feel a ſympathy with grief, becauſe we perceive the occaſion may become our own. As the character is the more good or great, we the more reverence their diſtreſſes, becauſe vir-

virtue, which gives a luſtre to ſucceſs, dignifies misfortune. If the perſon involved before our eyes in unmerited diſaſters, be to overcome them in the end, we indulge the preſent ſorrow the more willingly, becauſe we know it is to be followed by tranſport; or if he is to fall at laſt, ſtill we have the ſame conſolation; for even this we repreſent to ourſelves, as in ſome degree, ſucceſsful. Putting it to our own choice, we find that it is better to die like the hero, than to die as the murderer; and we congratulate with him, even in our condolance.

There are players who, tho' they feel all this on other occaſions, excite nothing of it themſelves. I have known thoſe who would glow as they heard a part read, and pay a tear to the diſtreſs, as they ſaw it repreſented by another, but who themſelves felt nothing when they played it. This is a particular ſluggiſhneſs of ſoul, and there is always with it an inattention. They hear or ſee the part as a character, and enter into the deſign; but they repeat it as a taſk. Too much care for remembering the words baniſhes the matter; and tho' eaſily deceived themſelves, they can delude nobody. Thoſe who do not affect us, becauſe they do not under-

ſtand their parts, are to be pitied, and the cenſure lies upon the manager who permitted them; but the others deſerve it themſelves: beſide a coldneſs of heart, they have negligence, the moſt inſolent fault a player can be guilty of.

But we are not always to attribute the actor's not affecting us ſufficiently to either of theſe cauſes; the terrors of an audience will ſometimes take away a great part of the natural powers, not only from a new player, but from an eſtabliſhed one in a new part. The want of applauſe will alſo ſometimes do this. People of modeſty will ſuppoſe they do not deſerve this, becauſe they do not receive it, and are afraid to exert their real talents, becauſe they doubt their reality. Mrs. Pritchard was many years in this ſituation: yet Mrs. Pritchard does not want ſpirit, only ſhe has modeſty. Mrs. Bland had leſs applauſe than ſhe deſerved, tho' ſhe had not a little of it: but in queen Elizabeth, in Jones's earl of Eſſex, ſhe, by ſome fortune, received that degree of applauſe ſhe had always deſerved, and ſhe was inſpired to demand more. That Mrs. Bland is greatly improved ſince the acting of that character is owing to the audiences then doing her juſtice.

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The firſt ſpeech that ever obtained Mrs. Pritchard a loud applauſe was in her Roſalind,

Take the cork out of thy mouth, that I may drink thy tidings.

The praiſe ſhe received for her ſpirited manner of ſpeaking this, gave a new ſpirit to all the reſt; ſhe was applauded throughout, and for ever after, *ex. gr. Corydon, Corydon, eſt tempore*, and otherwiſe, perhaps, the beſt actreſs of the Britiſh ſtage would have periſhed in obliviion. Have

Droop'd, and hung her diſcontented head,
Like merit ſcorn'd by inſolent authority,
And never grac'd the publick with her virtues.

CHAP. XV.

Of an amorous diſpoſition, and its advantage to certain players.

AS love can neither be concealed nor diſſembled, in real life, before eyes that have any degree of diſcernment: ſo on the ſtage that illuſion, which is the ſoul of all theatrical repreſentations, will never be well kept up in a love ſcene, unleſs the perſons who perform the characters, have hearts naturally ſuſceptible of the paſſion: and we ſhall then ſee it in the greateſt perfection, when thoſe who are to proteſt and vow to one another on the ſtage, in reality ſigh and doat on one another off. It is not much to the credit of the married ſtate, that huſband and wife have ſeldom been obſerved to play the lovers well upon the ſtage. We can remember two perſons, who, tho' they had both great merit as players, and had neither any thing of that diſſolute life, too frequent among thoſe of their profeſſion, yet when they were to be lovers on the ſtage, never played naturally. It will be

ſeen

ſeen that I have in my eye Mr. and Mrs. ———. Happy as they were in one another, the flat poſſeſſion put an end to tranſport, and tho', perhaps, enjoying ſomething much worthier and better, they could not diſſemble that. We may, on the other hand, recollect inſtances, (but I ſhall not name the perſons) where thoſe who were pretended lovers upon the ſtage, were real lovers off it; and we never ſaw characters performed in ſuch perfection.

A good figure is more neceſſary to thoſe who act lovers, than to the players of any other characters, and an harmony of voice is a great advantage.

Among the men, the lover for comedy and the lover for tragedy, are in many reſpects the ſame character; but in tragedy, the woman who is tender, is a character quite different from her who is ſprightly, and inclined to be courted in comedy. The actreſs beſt ſuited to the tender partt in tragedy, ſeldom ſucceeds in comedy; and the ſame holds good on the other ſide. We have known an actreſs endeavouring to raiſe another to reputation; it is a ſtrange inſtance of female generoſity, but we have known it: the pupil was an excellent coquette, in real life, conſequently a true comedy lady to

be courted, but that she should succeed in tragedy was impossible. Her fair patroness was tutoring her in the character of a princess neglected by the man she loved, in Hermione; and she could not make her concern natural. Heaven and earth, — said she, suppose it a reality, suppose yourself neglected by the man you loved, how should you act in real life. I! replied the scholar, I should certainly get another lover as quick as I could. Her instructress had understanding, she shut the book. Play coquettes, said she, hereafter, but never attempt tender and honourable love parts.

The advice was right. She who could entertain no ideas in a courtship but of interest or vanity, never could express what it was impossible for her to feel the delicacy of, a tender passion. If we ask why Mrs. Cibber is more herself in Juliet, than in any other character, it is because Mrs. Cibber has an heart more formed for love than for any other passion; and if we approve Miss Bellamy in her declarations of love in the same character, more than in any other, it is because she has an heart also more susceptible of tenderness than of any other passion. It is not easy to say whether we are to form the

same

ſame judgment of Miſs Noſſiter's heart, from her performing the ſame character; for we have not ſeen her in many others; but ſhe muſt be very excellent in many, if ſhe does not furniſh another inſtance.

It is indeed in this character of Juliet, that love is moſt itſelf, of any on the ſtage. In Belvidera there is the care of family mixed with the affection for an huſband. Statira is wanton when ſhe tells us Alexander

Kiſſes ſofter than a ſouthern wind;

and when Hermione reproaches Pyrrhus,

Have I not lov'd you then, perfidious man?
For you I ſlighted all the Grecian princes;

and in the reſt of that animated ſpeech, declares her claim to his heart; there is indeed a great deal of love, but there is ſo much pride, and ſo much reſentment, that the paſſion is blended and diſturbed; when love is moſt entire, it is moſt tender, and it is then it affects us the moſt powerfully; but it is then alſo it requires the player to have this happy quality, an heart formed for tenderneſs. This is the moſt difficult, but the moſt charming; a

thouſand may rant a Statira, or rave an Hermione, or weep a Belvidera, for one who can ſigh a Juliet.

Cordelia is another of thoſe characters in which an unmixed tenderneſs is to be expreſſed; and in that part of it where moſt of this is required, where the princeſs diſtinguiſhing at length her faithful Edgar in the diſguiſe of the madman, tells him,

Theſe hallowed rags of time, this naked virtue,
To me are dearer than the richeſt pomp
Of purple monarchs;

and in ſeveral other of theſe paſſages, we admired Miſs Bellamy vaſtly more than in other characters. People who ſpoke of her in Cordelia, to thoſe who had only ſeen her in others, were ſuppoſed to go much too far in their praiſes. It was to the ſame natural tenderneſs of heart that ſhe owed this peculiar excellence in that part of the character, and indeed in a great degree throughout; for the very filial love of Cordelia has much of the tenderneſs that characterizes the other paſſion. We have ſeen Mrs. Ward, who has a great deal of merit, quite cold and unfeeling through-

out this character; and therefore we have felt nothing as we attended to her playing it.

A man needs not be tyrannical in his nature, to act well a Bajazet, nor a ſavage in order to his playing the Jew of Venice; but to play a Romeo he muſt be a lover; and this is becauſe the others are eaſily imitated from what he ſees in others, or formed upon the ideas of rage and fierceneſs which he forms in his own mind: but in the caſe of love he cannot copy what he does not feel, nor can he who has not experience of the paſſion, form to himſelf any idea of it. For tyranny we expect an erect aſpect, an auſtere look, and a ſevere voice. Rage and fierceneſs expreſs themſelves by the geſtures, and tone of voice, as well as by the look, but love does more than thoſe, love not only throws the voice and aſpect into a new form, but it new models the whole man, it requires an abſolute reality to be ſeen, for no counterfeit will paſs upon even the meaneſt of the audience. A man who is very calm in himſelf, may counterfeit a perſon in a rage; but a man at eaſe will never be able to imitate the thouſand tranſports, fears, anxieties, and triumphs, that na-

turally succeed one another in love; and are all present, in some degree, in every moment of it.

We all feel, while we look upon the representation, and we will have from it something of reality. We see women sometimes act the parts of men, and in all but love we approve them. Mrs. Woffington pleases in Sir Harry Wildair in every part, except where she makes love; but there no one of the audience ever saw her without disgust; it is insipid, or it is worse; it conveys no ideas at all, or very hateful ones; and either the insensibility, or the disgust we conceive, quite break in upon the delusion.

We have men at this time on the stage, from whom love comes as unnaturally as from a dressed woman, and we never fail to be as much disgusted by it. These people should be employed for other parts; in others industry might help them, and they may become tolerable by imitation. Here nothing does but nature, it is in vain to attempt the impossibility; for it would be as impossible to make him who feels nothing from beauty in real life, represent what should be felt on such occasions on the stage, as to make

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the dark night by artificial luſtre, imitate the day.

From the whole it follows, that only certain perſons of thoſe who are qualified for the ſtage are fit to act love parts: and theſe can only do it to a certain age. The bloom of youth is required in the woman who is to be courted, and the prime of life in the man who is to court. If a player will, becauſe he has ſucceeded when young, continue in theſe characters when advanced in years, he miſleads his audience, miſrepreſents his author, and perplexes the whole play. To be pleaſed at a theatrical repreſentation, the deluſion muſt be kept up: nature only can do this. When we ſee the man declined into years, following the blooming actreſs, and mistake the paſſion. His time of age makes it dotage, and in the midſt of the ſoft and tendereſt ſpeeches we have in our thoughts

The peerleſs priveſs of Solopian plains,

and cannot perſuade ourſelves that all is ſerious! The man advanced in life does not ſee with the ſame eyes that he did in youth, nor is capable of the ſame ſenſations: we know this, and cannot perſuade ourſelves that

that there is any appearance of earneſt in the ſcene: with the beſt qualifications for other parts, they are contemptible in theſe, becauſe they are unnatural. The neceſſity of a theatre may force a man upon this, but if it ſo happen, to be decent is all he ſhould aim at: and when we ſee it is of neceſſity, we ſhall excuſe where it is impoſſible to approve.

CHAP. XVI.

Concerning the peculiar kinds of voice, ſuited to peculiar characters.

THERE are certain requiſites to all players, as players; theſe have been ſpoken of already: but beſide theſe, there are others, which are equally neceſſary to certain players, or as players of certain parts. Some of theſe alſo have been conſidered: we are to examine the reſt.

Voice is neceſſary to all actors; for nothing could be ſo ridiculous, as for the perſon who could not be heard, to expect he ſhould be approved: yet ſomething like this we have ſeen attempted. If Palma can ſing, who has no voice; why cannot

cannot manner ſupply its place in me, who am to act? This was the addreſs of a perſon who deſired to play Othello. The manager knew his place, and he ſucceeds very well in pantomime.

Every player, therefore, muſt have a voice; but a finer is required for ſome characters than others. If the comedian be articulate it is enough; but in tragedy we expect the ſilver ſound, the full and clear tone, and all the variety of ſoft and forcible. To him who would ſucceed in parts, the character of which is love, ſmoothneſs of tone is the great happineſs; for rage and ſudden anger, as in Lear and other characters of that kind, the ſhrill and piercing is the happy tone; for majeſty, the full, deep note; for tyrannic ſeverity, it is rough, but this muſt not be harſh, for we allow not diſcords: and beſide all theſe, there is a ſteady tone for declamation. Mr. Barry poſſeſſes the firſt beyond all men, his Caſtalio gives the ſtrongeſt inſtances. Where Lear was mentioned as the inſtance, Mr. Garrick ſcarce needs be named as the example. Mr. Quin poſſeſſed the tone of majeſty, and till ſome body elſe can ſay,

Porcia is dead,

as we have heard him chill an audience by pronouncing it, we muſt allow that excellence loſt to us. Mr. Moſſop ſhews us in Zanga the fourth kind; but he is not limited to this ſingle happineſs of tone. Tamerlane is a character that requires the laſt, the full, ſonorous, even, mellow note; but we have never, that I know of, heard it as it ſhould be played.

There are theſe varieties in the occaſions of tragedy; but it is not ſo in comedy, even a full ſonorous voice, ſo neceſſary to the tragedian, would be here a diſadvantage. A voice that is under the perfect command of the perſon, and that can be thrown into a thouſand changes, is to be wiſhed for in comedy; for theſe are the qualities required to expreſs the ſudden and various ſtarts of paſſion, that make up the beauty of thoſe ſcenes. A voice too full and great carries us out of nature; for we want people in comedy to talk like men, and not like heroes.

Eaſe is the character of comedy, as dignity of tragedy, let the voice for the one be therefore familiar, as for the other great. In comedy, if a tender or affecting ſcene be introduced, it is intended to touch the heart; in tragedy it ſhould pierce; and there are voices ſuited to it. Of all others,

Mr.

Mr. Garrick's, which in its full perfection, and on a proper occaſion, pierces and ſtrikes the heart, as the ſound of a trumpet.

When we hear the jealouſy of a Statira, or the rage of an Hermione, from the voice of a gentle actreſs ſcarce to be heard, we fancy a full chorus of an oratorio played on a dancing-maſter's kit. On the contrary, whoever heard the Alicia of Mrs. Cibber, or Hermione of Mrs. Gregory, without feeling more than the author did when he wrote the ſcenes?

Thoſe who are to act the principal characters in genteel comedy, tho' they need not have the full voice of the tragedian, muſt have a melodious one, and ſuch as can be heard diſtinctly, without being raiſed to bawling; for ſuch perſons are to be underſtood as above ſuch emotions. The voice of theſe perſons muſt be ſuch as can be managed gracefully. Eaſe, and a degree of dignity, are the great requiſites for theſe characters; and the voice, as well as figure, may come under this deſignation. It is true, that in real life, nature deals no better with people of faſhion, than with beggars, indeed ſeldom quite ſo well: we have the crooked and the hoarſe; but as we do not bear imperfections in the heroes of trage-

dy, we expect only the beſt face of nature in theſe.

The voice of the perſon who plays ſuch a character, muſt have a degree of ſtrength; for in certain parts, where pride is concerned, it muſt aſcend toward the tone of tragedy; and where love, it muſt be moſt intereſting. A judicious modulation of voice ſhall give more force to a tender expreſſion, than it can receive from all the action in the world.

The difference between the tragedian and the comedian of this caſt, in point of voice, is, that the one muſt have a great voice; the other, a great command of it. And yet more of this is required in the actreſs, than in the actor, in the tender ſcenes of comedy. We have ſeen more; ſome men ſucceed in theſe parts with only tolerable voices, women never, without excellent ones. Mrs. Woffington wanted only this requiſite to have excelled all the women in the world in the amorous parts of comedy; but all her merit could not atone for that defect. We might hear a Bevil, even tho' his voice wanted melody; but we ſhall never ſee an Indiana, except in Mrs. Cibber, that elegant and perſuaſive accent, no man or woman ever poſſeſſed equally

equally with this actreſs, gives a beauty to the character, which exceeds all praiſe.

In the meaneſt characters in comedy, a ſweetneſs of voice is expected from the women, for it is natural. It is one of the diſtinctions of the ſex; and we think we are defrauded, or impoſed upon, when we hear harſh ſounds from delicate lips.

CHAP. XVII.

Of that peculiar figure which is ſuited to particular characters.

AS there is a voice adapted to the genteel comedy, and a different one required for tragedy, ſo it is with reſpect to figure. For the firſt characters in the one we expect a graceful, a genteel, and an eaſy figure; but for the conſiderable parts in the other, a majeſtic and a ſtriking one. It is of vaſt importance to the young actor to conſider theſe things; for an audience always is affected by them, and his ſucceſs depends on them. He may be very well cut out for a player, but may never ſucceed, as he ought, in the profeſſion, from his not knowing what are the cha-

characters for which nature has formed him. Were there twenty Luſignans on the ſtage, Mr. Sparks would make a frequent great player; if Mr. Barry had attempted comedy with that figure, voice, and manner, ſo perfectly adapted to the tragic hero, and the tragic lover, we had never known a tenth part of his excellence; and if Mr. Smith would aim at excellence in comedy, we ſhould ſee him a thouſand times a better Heartfree than a Theodoſius.

There are characters in tragedy, in which a perfectly fine figure is not of ſuch abſolute neceſſity: we can over-look the want of perſonal perfections, in conſideration of the virtues of an hero, tho' we cannot bear abſolute deformities: but in comedy, where things are brought a little nearer to nature, and mens ſouls are drawn no better than they are in real life, we will not over-look defects in their bodies. If the author has intended to repreſent an abſurd paſſion in the lady, an ill figure in the lover may do well, but elſe it is intolerable. We want to praiſe the performance of the actreſs, without condemning the taſte of the woman; ſo much of the illuſion we do expect to be kept up. We ſhould think Juliet mad, if Mr. Arthur

thur acted Romeo, tho' he had all the merit of Mr. Barry; and we ſhould laugh at lady Fanciful in the wrong place, if Mr. Ray were Heartfree. We ſee, by theſe inſtances, how perfectly the very intent of a ſcene may be perverted by an injudicious choice of the perſons who are to act it, only in point of figure: and from this we ſee how neceſſary it is, that the actor who is to play genteel characters in comedy, as well as he who is to repreſent the heroes of tragedy, ſhould have a graceful figure.

All the outrageous fondneſs of a Juliet is proper, and all the eagerneſs that Mrs. Cibber herſelf can throw into her exclamation, in which ſhe bids the fiery ſteeds, who draw the chariot of the day, gallop apace to Phœbus' manſion, and reminds them how ſuch a charioteer as Phaeton would whip 'em to the weſt, when ſo fine a fellow as Barry is the object of her paſſion: but I cannot help thinking, nor am I ſingular in it, that even the ſame ſpirit loſes half its beauty, now that the Romeo is ſomething ſhorter, ſomething leſs young, and, perhaps, a little leſs handſome.

When the perſon of the lover is fit to inſpire tenderneſs, all appears natural;

and

and where not, all the merit thoſe two performers poſſeſs, which is probably more than any two ever did poſſeſs, is not enough to make up this deficiency. The Garrick Jaffeir is as proper in his figure, as the Barry of the ſame character; and the tenderneſs flows as naturally. It is the love of a wife, it is the gratitude of paſt ſervices, and the endearment ariſing from having borne affliction together. Theſe are ſources of a paſſion that are as compatible with a perſon neither very young, nor perfectly delicate, as with the fineſt figure and fulleſt bloom; perhaps better: but in Romeo it is otherwiſe. It is the figure and the addreſs that ſtrike; for heaven's ſake therefore let us have addreſs an dfigure in the player. Here is no family, no paſt diſtreſs, nor any remembrance of paſt ſervices: it is the love of a girl for a youth; founded only on his external accompliſhments; for ſhe has ſeen no other. The whole character therefore is out of nature, if we have not all that can charm a woman in the lover.

We know players are but the repreſenters of theſe things; but if we are to be pleaſed with the repreſentation, it muſt come near reality. The illuſion muſt be ſupported by, at leaſt, external appear-

ances,

ances, or it will never paſs upon us. Miſs Cibber was a Juliet in the Hay-market, and we approved her greatly; but there was an air of improbability in the whole play: the lover was her father. Had ſhe been courted by another Romeo, it is not eaſy to ſay to what an excellence we ſhould have ſeen the character. There was a perfect underſtanding of the part; great ſenſibility, and giddy youth, the very age and character of Juliet: all were affected greatly; but the diſadvantage was no more to be overcome than it was to be avoided, as things then were circumſtanced.

A man may court Miſs Noſſiter in all the rage of tragedy, or all the enthuſiaſm of comic extravagance, and it will appear natural: but let an Oreſtes ſigh for Mrs. James in his Hermione, or purſue the cruel Angelica, acted by Miſs —, and we ſhall be diſguſted. Even if the lover could play his part perfectly, there would be a want of nature, that would undo all. Let it not be underſtood, that theſe actreſſes are mentioned here for cenſure, they do not play theſe parts, nor wiſh to play them: their merit is of another kind, and they are conſcious of it.

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The author expects a blooming actress for his principal lady, whether it be tragedy or comedy he writes, and the audience is not, nor can be satisfied, when his expectations are not answered.

When Menelaus gave away his daughter,
His lovely *daughter to the happy Pyrrhus,*

Such is the expression every where of Orestes,

I thought how the divine *Hermione,*
Deaf to my vows———

and the like are his constant and reiterated phrases; let us, for heaven's sake, therefore see an Hermione that has some beauty. If not, the poet's plan is misrepresented, and we see something else, and not the play he wrote. These external accomplishments of Hermione, are all she has to boast; for within she has no charms for Orestes, a jilt and dissembler, mean, insolent, and cruel. Orestes is to be mad to adore and worship, not admire this mistress, and to sacrifice to her his honour, and the greatest of all characters, that of embassador from many powerful states; and become, at her command, a murderer.

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We ſee nothing in her conduct that can deſerve this rage of paſſion; for ſhe evidently, and to the face of Oreſtes, doats on Pyrrhus; if therefore her perſon is not fine, all is unnatural, the lover is a madman throughout; and nothing has the face of nature or reality.

It is thus, tho' perhaps in a leſs degree, in many other inſtances, and by this we ſee how abſolutely neceſſary a fine perſon is to an actreſs, who is to play principal characters, as well as to an actor. I wiſh our managers would think a little more of it. We are ſhocked too frequently with lovers ſighing for little better than deformity. When this is neceſſary, we muſt be patient; where it might be avoided, the fault is unpardonable. We are not to be underſtood as cenſuring thoſe who are named thus, as paſt the time of life when theſe characters could ſit well upon them. It is no crime to be paſt five and twenty; but when ſhe, who has twice that age, from her authority on the ſtage, takes from an actreſs of youth and figure ſuch a character, ſhe deſerves to be expoſed and laughed at. We ſuffer good players longer than bad ones; but the women who have been ever ſo good, leſs long than the men. When we bear with them,

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it is becauſe we underſtand they are only labouring for their bread; when they will force themſelves upon us in wrong characters, they are unpardonable.

An actor of an ill figure would be contemptible in a monarch's character, and an old man is not leſs ſo in a character of youth. The reaſon is the ſame, both are unnatural; the hero is to be majeſtic, and his mien ſhould be mild with all its dignity, naturally mild, tho' when provoked, terrible. We ſee indeed a kind of ſavage in Othello, but this is not from nature, Iago works him to it ſlowly, difficultly, and with the deepeſt cunning. His fury would be too horrible without theſe circumſtances; but as it is, when Iago is well acted, we hardly blame him for the crime, notwithſtanding all the horror and brutality of murdering a wife. Shakeſpear has reconciled it to the character of an hero: but Shakeſpear has done this in vain, if the actor do not by his deportment aſſiſt in it.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

Concerning the age of the player, as connected with that of the character.

THIS ſubject has been neceſſarily mentioned more than once already; what has been advanced before ſhall not be repeated; but let us add ſome farther obſervations. A conformity between the age of the perſon playing, and the perſon repreſented, ought always to be kept up, but in ſome caſes more perfectly than others. We do not pardon the portrait painter who makes the picture like, but older; nor can we ever ſee, without the ſevereſt diſapprobation, a wrinkled Eudoſia, or a grey-haired Varanes: we expect, in ſuch characters, more than the abſence of defects: we expect a real bloom and youth, and, if that can be, beauty. There are a thouſand others, in which years, in the performer, are intolerable. In comedy, a diſparity of age between the perſon and the character, is better allowed of, than in tragedy; and it is in the lower characters more tolerable than

in the higher; for as theſe approach to tragedy they ſhare its rules. Men are alſo better borne with, when a little too old, than women, as has been obſerved already; and the reaſon is in nature: an old lover is but at beſt but ridiculous, but an old woman in the ſame ſituation, gives diſguſt.

There is a certain age, up to which a great command of voice and manner, with the aſſiſtance of the common arts of the ſtage, will counterfeit the girl; but after this we are ſhocked when it is attempted. Two of our greateſt actreſſes are upon the brink of this period, they have hitherto been the girl in tragedy, and the romp in comedy when it was required of them; but they will do well to be wiſe in time. There are characters enough in which they may ſhine when theſe are given to others. Of this they may be ſure, a good old woman is, on the ſtage, as well as in life, at any time worth fifty bad young ones.

Some women have it in their power to remain, others have not; we ſee both aim at it; but by what we ſee, it is evident, that nothing is of ſo much importance to an actreſs, who is more than forty, as to convince herſelf truly, whether ſhe is, or is not, one of thoſe whoſe ſpirit, manner, coun-

countenance and voice, will, or will not, ſupport the pretenſion. There is a glaſs in which ſhe may ſee this truly, and but one; no Gil Blas will be believed, who tells her ſhe grows grey and feeble; but the eyes of an audience are an undiſſembling mirror. It will be a mortifying diſcovery to ſee ſhe is no longer agreeable; but it is better to be chagrined once, than to be ridiculous for ever.

CHAP. XIX.

Concerning the characters of footmen and chambermaids.

THE advantages which are ſo immediately neceſſary to capital players, are few of them of abſolute neceſſity to thoſe who are to play inferior characters; and of thoſe which are, ſcarce any are required in ſo great perfection. It is therefore the ſubordinate characters are more eaſily filled than the greater; and this is happy, becauſe they are the moſt numerous.

Youth, which is ſo eſſential to the belle in comedy, and to the princeſs of the tragic

ſcene as well as to the hero and the lover, may very well be diſpenſed with, among the lower characters. A man may make as good a footman at five and forty, as at eighteen; and the chambermaid, whoſe bloom is paſt, does full as well as while ſhe had it: often they are the better for their age, and for their indifferent figures; where the maid is to be made ridiculous, by an affected elegance, or a pride in imaginary conqueſts, the more unlikely ſhe is to have the one, or to make the other the better; and when the footman is to be a coxcomb in his own character, or is to put on that of a gentleman, to deceive ſome lady Wiſhfor't, the aukwarder his manner, and the worſe his perſon, the better. We want, in the one inſtance, to laugh at her; and in the other at the lady, and the more prepoſterous the ſcene, the better.

It is not only that advanced years and inelegant figures, may be borne with, and employed by choice in the loweſt parts of comedy; but there is ſcarce any time of life under abſolute infirmity, or any ſhape, under real diſtortion, that may not be employed to advantage. As an advanced time of life may be allowed in a chambermaid, in ſome plays, extreme girliſhneſs

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is a merit in others. When the maid adviſes her miſtreſs, the abſurdity riſes the higher, the more ignorant and inexperienced ſhe ſeems.

Tho' youth and beauty are not neceſſary to the women who play theſe characters, there are certain requiſites as indiſpenſible to them, as theſe are to the ſuperior players; and theſe muſt come, like their beſt qualifications, from nature, tho' they may be greatly improved by practice. Among theſe the principal are, an importantpertneſs of manner, and a volubility of tongue. Miſs Pit is happy in the firſt of theſe, Mrs. Green poſſeſſed the latter beyond all women. We expect in them alſo an archneſs of look. Low cunning is the characteriſtic of theſe parts, as dignity is of heroes.

We have been uſed to ſee an undaunted brazenneſs in the place of this, but it is a fault in us to like it; 'tis not in nature, and therefore cannot be right in the ſcene.

The characteriſtics of the footman, are ſubmiſſion and attention, a cringing humility, and an obſervant obedience. While a footman is upon the ſtage, he ſhould be always in motion; it is ſaid of all characters, but it is true of his; an agility of body therefore is proper, unleſs in peculiar

liar characters of footmen: otherwiſe a clumſy ſervant of this caſt, is as abſurd as a ſtuttering chambermaid.

We have ſeen people formed for better characters ſometimes play theſe; but it has not ſucceeded. Mrs. Woffington, in Phillis, was a woman of faſhion in diſguiſe, and Mr. Dyer, in Tom, ſhews us, that he is out of character: that he is, and ought to be, ſomething better. We have ſeen Mr. Yates and Mr. Woodward in the characters of footmen, and we applauded both, but they ſit the moſt happily on the former. If Mr. Woodward do not offend us with the diſguiſed politeneſs of Mrs. Woffington; he has too much of that ſaucy and unnatural familiarity which we ſee in Mrs. Clive. There are characters in which this perſon excels all the players we have ſeen, perhaps, all that have ever been, but theſe are not of the number, and it would be prudent in him to give them up to ſuch as cannot execute any thing greater.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

Concerning the general aſſiſtance that the natural accompliſhments of the player may receive from art.

IN a former treatiſe, under the ſame name with this, the general obſervations were divided under the two heads of the advantages of nature, and their aſſiſtances from art, but as it was impoſſible to ſpeak of the former, without frequent mention of thoſe aſſiſtances, the latter part of that work had too much the air of repetition. In this, thoſe obſervations have been given in their places more at large; and this ſucceeding part, avoiding thoſe repetitions, will be more conciſe.

So much is required to qualify people for the ſtage, that few are fit for the profeſſion; and of theſe, very few for the higher ſtages of it. We ſee people quite unqualified received, and we find there are not a few, who, by the blindneſs of the managers, are puſhed forward, tho' without one requiſite for ſucceeding.

We ſhall never be able to baniſh or to improve theſe: nor will all the arguments in the world prevail with the others as unfit from offering themſelves, while they are witneſſes of their ſucceſs. We ſee theſe unqualified by nature, and ignorant that there is ſuch a thing as art. Let them continue ſo, for art cannot make a voice or perſon: it is only uſeful where nature has done her part; and the immediate requiſite to the uſe of it, is that which nature has moſt evidently denied theſe perſons, an underſtanding.

CHAP. XXI.

Of the general truth of theatrical repreſentations.

THAT thoſe to whom nature has been liberal, may know in what manner they are to employ art in aſſiſting her, they are firſt to examine in what the perfection of their profeſſion conſiſts.

The intent of playing is to repreſent nature in great or agreeable occurrences: and conſequently all repreſentations on the ſtage pleaſe the more, the more they reſemble

ſemble real occurrences. It is the buſineſs of the player to bring theſe fictions as near to realities as he can; and when he does this perfectly, he gives us what is properly the *truth* of theatrical repreſentation. We expreſs, by that term, a concourſe of all thoſe appearances that may deceive the audience into an opinion, that they are attending to a real adventure.

Something is done toward this in the ſcenery, but that is little, and lies with the manager; it is not of the province here treated of; but the great part is what falls under our immediate conſideration here: the action, manner, and deportment of the player. The truth of playing appears when every look and geſture, as well as every accent of the actor, agrees with the age, condition, and ſituation of his character, and with the immediate circumſtance of that moment. The general character continues the ſame, but the paſſions vary it, in part, continually.

For a Sciolto we expect wrinkles, and the appearances of age; for he is a father: we expect alſo dignity; for he is a perſon of rank. The actor will not pleaſe if an air of nobility be not connected with that of age in every part; but then he is to vary in the ſeveral circumſtances, he

muſt expreſs joy in the firſt acts, and reſentment and deſpair in the latter: yet both the joy and the deſpair muſt be thoſe of a great and antient man. In this conſiſts the truth of theatrical repreſentation. Joy and deſpair are not only to be expreſſed, but they muſt be ſhewn as they would affect ſuch a peculiar character. Mr. Sparkes has a great deal of merit in this part. If he is naturally wanting in point of dignity, he has no other defect in it.

Bajazet, and alderman Fondlewife, are both provoked in the ſame manner, and both are to expreſs jealouſy and reſentment; but the paſſions are to be ſuited to the characters, and they are ſo different, that all appears different with them.

In the ſame manner Love, in youth, is raſh, in age it is wary; in one it ought to burſt forth in tranſport unguarded and open: in the other it is to make its way by degrees, and with vaſt circumſpection. The hero of tragedy laments with dignity, and when he threatens, does it without fury: in comedy there is alſo leſs violence in the anger of a ſuperior character, than in that of an inferior; for the firſt has been formed by an education. If a ſum of money be loſt, the miſer feels

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it one way, and the rake another; and the coxcomb is not to be confounded by a reproof, in the manner of him who has merit and modeſty. In the Fop's Fortune, parallel accidents happen to the fop and to the ſcholar, but their deportment under them is to be perfectly different. The ſenſible lover would not, when he had loſt his miſtreſs, be in diſtreſs about his ſnuff-box. The author characterizes them ſtrongly, but he does this in vain, if the player does not join him in every article of the deportment. It is in vain that he recites the words, if he do not ſhew, by his accent, that he feels their meaning; and he does even this in vain, if he do not confirm the appearance by appropriated action.

CHAP. XXII.

Concerning the truth of action.

TO be exactly right in point of action on the ſtage, is to act exactly as the perſon repreſented would have done in the ſame circumſtances. Obſervation therefore, and conſideration, are the true inſtruc-

tors; the player is to throw himſelf without reſtraint into the circumſtance, and obſerving what is his own natural deportment, he is to recollect that of ſome other perſon of politeneſs and underſtanding, in a parallel circumſtance; and on comparing his own action with that of the other, and judging, without prejudice, where either is excellent or amiſs, he will be able, from both, to form a true action for the circumſtance.

In comedy, the lover may be introduced into the chamber of his miſtreſs, and may find her ſoothing an imaginary abſence, by reading his letters. Tho' he ſpeak not a word he may act expreſſively. He may advance and recede as he dreads being ſeen; and the joy and fear, the triumph and terrors, ſucceeding one another in his countenance, may expreſs themſelves more ſtrongly than the poet could have done in words, could there have been words in the ſcene.

When an Iphigenia aſks the father who is going to ſacrifice her, if ſhe ſhall be preſent at the ſolemnity; an actor would at firſt think of looking with great tenderneſs upon her, as he anſwered, *you ſhall*: but this would be a falſe, not a true action. He is to turn his eyes away, for nothing

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is to give the leaſt hint of his purpoſe. Thus they play on the French ſtage, who might in this article, the truth of action, inſtruct our beſt performers.

When Hamlet bids his mother look at the ghoſt, to whom he ſpeaks in her cloſet, ſhe turns away for fear ſhe ſhould ſee it, becauſe the poet makes her deny that ſhe does. This has the appearance of right; but her true action is to look full upon the place, for Shakeſpear repreſents all his ghoſts as viſible only to the particular perſon they addreſs: this may be ſeen in Banquo's apparition at Mackbeth's feaſt. The table is full, and the eyes of all the company are on the king, yet no one ſees what it is that diſturbs him. Theſe, and a thouſand other inſtances, ſhew that the true action for a circumſtance of tragedy (and the rule holds in comedy as ſtrongly) may be very different from what firſt preſents itſelf to the player's imagination.

In comedy, the difficulty of arriving at this truth of action is greater; for there the actor is often to play two parts at the ſame time. Mrs. Fondlewife, when her huſband and her lover are with her together, is under this difficulty; and we have a Mrs. Fondlewife who does it excellently.

The Intriguing Chambermaid in one ſcene has three parts to act at once; this is where Mr. Goodall and Mrs. Highmore are on the ſtage together. She is to conſtrue every action of either into madneſs to the other; and all the while is to expreſs her own fear of being diſcovered; there is hardly a ſcene in which the truth of action is more difficult: and this Mrs. Clive does perfectly. In many characters of this kind, almoſt all that we admire is in this actreſs; we give to the author the praiſe which belongs to her. The characters are in themſelves trifles, and whenever ſhe quits them, we ſhall find their great merit depended on the truth of her action. It is well we ſhould ſometimes ſee the character improved by the player; for we ſee a thouſand murdered.

This truth of action conſiſts principally in three things: the changes in countenance, attitude, and geſture, are the means of it; and all depend upon their being conducted with judgment.

To make the changes of countenance to affect us as they ought, the paſſion muſt be expreſſed truly by the eyes; and not only truly but forcibly. This marking a paſſion ſtrongly, is the great article, and it depends moſt upon the eyes; if they have

have not ſtrength and vivacity, nothing is poſſible. People who mark things weakly, are not fit for the ſtage. The paintings ſhewn there are ſeen from a diſtance, and they are to be proportioned for that view. An expreſſion of countenance that does very well in converſation, is loſt on the ſtage. A ſaint Paul of the natural ſize might have done for the choir; but that which was to be exalted to the dome, needed to be a Coloſſus. The actor is to conſider his pictures in this light. His looks and geſtures are ſo many paintings made to be ſeen at a diſtance, and they muſt often be extravagant in themſelves, that they may not ſoften into nothing.

All this muſt be done, but it muſt be done with judgment. Falſe apprehenſion may exaggerate, but in the ſtrict adherence to nature's rules, tho' in an enlarged ſcale, lies this *truth*. The picture, tho' enlarged, muſt not be diſtorted; and while the paſſions animate, they are not to diſfigure the countenance. People who ſucceed well in many things often miſs in this. We ſee thoſe who throwing their features into contortions, under diſtreſs, excite diſtaſte, inſtead of compaſſion.

The countenance of a player may be ſuited to the expreſſion only of one paſſion. There are aſpects naturally ſad, and others laughing with continual jollity. Thoſe who poſſeſs theſe will never be univerſal players; but they may be excellent in particular characters: they ſhould confine themſelves to ſuch, and nature, without art or knowledge, will give them ſomething very like this truth of action.

Geſtures have their determinate ſignification as well as words; and they can no more be miſunderſtood: the life and ſpirit of a repreſentation depend greatly upon theſe; and what is more than both, its truth. We may expreſs to an audience every paſſion of the heart by theſe, without words: Often the player is not allowed words, and when he is, theſe give them double force and energy. There are peculiar geſtures for every paſſion, nay, for every ſtage of paſſion; but theſe are not arbitrary, or what the player pleaſes; they are dictated by nature; they are common to all mankind, and therefore all men underſtand them. In general, theſe are to be leſs violent, the more conſiderable is the character; but ſtill they are equally expreſſive. The player of ſubordinate characters will require more and ſtronger, but

but the regulated ones, which have place in the greateſt ſcenes, have their effect at full. Our beſt players have, perhaps, too many of them: but there are ſcenes, in which paſſion getting the better of all other conſiderations, they can hardly be too violent. It is in genteel comedy the principal performers ought to be moſt aware of the impropriety of their exceſs; for there the paſſions are not ſo ſtrong: tho' people of high life feel as much as their inferiors, they have diſſimulation, which the others want, to check the violent emotions.

Great paſſions will juſtify violent geſtures in any character, but excepting for this, the principal perſons in comedy ſhould uſe fewer than the others: the chief characters in tragedy admit ſtill leſs, than theſe; for as much, at leaſt, as the gentleman is above the vulgar, ſo much is the hero above the gentleman. Mr. Garrick has been accuſed of this ſinking below the dignity of his character in Pierre, but he has changed it now for Jaffeir. In either he muſt be excellent; but certainly he might, with due attention, make the much greater figure in Pierre. Mr. Garrick's great natural ſharpneſs is the cauſe of failing in this, for excellencies may give birth

birth to faults; and we ſee in ſome paſſages of his Lear, excellent as he is in many parts of it, the king ſunk into the ſatyriſt, as we before ſaw the hero:

Honeſt men
Are the ſoft eaſy cuſhions on which knaves
Repoſe and fatten,

ſays the ſoldier to his friend; and

See how the juſtice rails at the ſimple thief; ſhake them together, and the firſt that drops out, thief or juſtice, is a villain,

ſays the king in his ravings. Severity is very plain in both theſe; and tho' it be difficult, the pride of the ſoldier, and the dignity of the monarch might have been kept up with that ſeverity; and the tone and geſture which ſhould have maintained that eſſential character, while it gave all the force to the ſatyr, would have exhibited the truth of action.

There are paſſages which, as it were, cheat the actor into the fault, there being ſomething beſide the dignity to be regarded; and that more tempting. On the contrary, there are characters in which dignity is the great idea always kept alive in

in the player's mind. Cato is of this kind, and Bajazet; and there is another in which the character is more than mortal, *Comus*. In this Mr. Quin, by the force of dignity alone hid all his natural defects, and ſupported the part at ſuch a height, that none have been received in it ſince.

The ſtar that bids the ſhepherd fold,
Now the top of heaven doth hold,

are lines which, tho' beautiful, have nothing of natural greatneſs, but Mr. Quin made darkneſs as he ſpoke them. The ſolemnity and enthuſiaſm with which he pronounced them, called up the idea of a ſtill and dead midnight, more than all the deſcription even of Milton: when he afterwards delivered,

The ſounds, the ſeas, and all their ſinny drove,
Now to the moon in wav'ring morrice move;

ſo ſtrong was the imagery he added, to the ſtrength already given by the poet, that we ſaw the curled waves break in upon the calm repoſe of the night, and the

the peaceful fiſhes riſing and falling under their indented motion.

When he afterwards, with that change of tone, and cadence, which he poſſeſſed beyond all mortal men (ſpite of the charge of his monotony) added,

While on the tawny ſands and ſhelves,
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves,

we ſmiled and ſhook, and ſaw the little beings,

Whoſe midnight revels, by a foreſt ſide,
Or fountain, ſome belated peaſant ſees;
Or dreams he ſees, while over head the moon
Sits arbitreſs, and nearer to the earth
Wheels her pale courſe.

His invocation of Cotytto was maſterly beyond all theſe. It was not delivered with awe and humility, as men addreſs their prayers; for it was not of a mortal to a deity, but a ſuperior nature addreſſing another, nothing more than equal:

Hail goddeſs of nocturnal ſport,
Dark veil'd Cotytto, t' whom the ſecret flame

Of

Of midnight torches burn,
——Stay thy cloudy ebon chair.

There was in this all the ſolemnity and ſerious attention of a prayer, tho' nothing of the confeſſed inferiority; we glowed, we trembled with delight and terror, as his deep voice pronounced it. He roſe upon his audience thro' the whole courſe of this great character; and at the laſt, when to the lady, who would riſe and leave him, he ſaid,

Nay, lady, ſit. If I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all bound up in alabaſter,
And you a ſtatue: or, as Daphne was,
Root-bound, that fled Apollo;

we heard the greateſt ſentence ever pronounced upon the Britiſh theatre. Throughout the part he courts not as a mortal, but as a ſuperior power, by promiſes not entreaties; and when at the laſt he proceeds to threats, the poet has not more happily choſen his words, than this player pronounced them.

There was in all this very little of geſture: the look, the elevated poſture, and the brow of majeſty did all. This was moſt juſt; for as the hero of tragedy exceeds

ceeds the gentleman of comedy, and therefore in his general deportment is to uſe fewer geſtures; the deity of the maſque exceeds the hero in dignity, and therefore is to be yet more ſparing.

Theſe rules however are general; they are not to be extended to particulars; for there are circumſtances in tragedy in which no geſture can be too violent. Romeo and Othello afford the greateſt inſtances of theſe, and we ſee them happily played by the two great actors of our time.

Cuſtom alſo, and the taſte of a country is, in ſome degree, to preſcribe. In France, the actor may uſe more action, than in the ſedate England; and in England, more than in the inſipid Italy. There are another ſet of characters, the moſt remote from theſe imaginable; and yet which allow of the moſt violent geſtures; theſe are thoſe creatures of the fancy which we ſee exhibited in farce. The Mock Doctor is a monſter that never had exiſtence in nature, any more than an unicorn or a mermaid. In theſe, extravagance is the great merit, both in the author and the actor, and he will always ſucceed beſt, who is fartheſt beyond every thing natural.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

Concerning truth in Recitation.

THE actor in vain accommodates his geſtures and deportment to the character, if he do not pronounce the words that are put into his mouth with equal judgment. There was a time when that extravagance, which has been juſt recommended for farce, had its place in tragedy, both in action and delivery. The geſtures were forced, and beyond all that ever was in nature, and the recitation was a kind of ſinging. We are at preſent getting more into nature in playing; and if the violence of geſture be not quite ſuppreſſed, we have nothing of the recitative of the old tragedy.

It is to the honour of Mr. Macklin, that he began this great improvement. There was a time when he was excluded the theatres, and ſupported himſelf by a company whom he taught to play, and ſome of whom afterwards made no inconſiderable figure. It was his manner to check all the cant and cadence of tragedy; he would bid his

his pupil firſt ſpeak the paſſage as he would in common life, if he had occaſion to pronounce the ſame words; and then giving them more force, but preſerving the ſame accent, to deliver them on the ſtage. Where the player was faulty in his ſtops or accents, he ſet him right; and with nothing more than this attention to what was natural, he produced out of the moſt ignorant perſons, players that ſurprized every body. The *Montano* mentioned before, was one of theſe, and this inſtruction was the ſource of all his merit.

People were pleaſed with a ſenſible delivery on this little ſtage, and thoſe that ſaw that they were, transferred it to the greater, where it at this time flouriſhes, and will flouriſh, as long as good ſenſe lives in the audience. Tragedy has now no peculiar accent or tone, but the moſt outrageous ſcenes of it are ſpoken according to Macklin's plan, as the ſame words would be pronounced in common ſpeech, only with more energy.

To be excellent in delivery, is to ſpeak judiciouſly; without this, the beſt voice is thrown away; and with it, even a coarſe one pleaſes. The Cremona fiddle is nothing in the hands of a child, but a maſter will produce muſic from a hum-ſtrum.

Of

Of old the delivery of ſpeeches in tragedy was regulated by certain muſical notes; but what that practice was, we do not perfectly underſtand: if it were ſomething like the ſinging we have heard practiſed, it makes terrible muſic. The Abbe Condillac ſuppoſes, if the voices of our comic actors were regulated muſically, it would have a good effect; but this is worſe than the other, as there is not even meaſure to ſupport it. We know it cannot take the true effect; for we ſee paſſionate parts in oratorios delivered in recitative; and one of them, Sampſon, is collected from Milton; yet thoſe paſſages in the Sampſon Agoniſtes, which would have pierced the heart if Mr. Quin had ſpoke them, only tinkle in our ears when Mr. Beard delivers them in recitative, tho' the beſt who ever ſpoke that language. Du Bos thinks the notes of the Greeks were not muſical, but were marks for cadence and energy. This is more reaſonable. An indifferent actor might want to be informed where he was to lay the emphaſis in his part of the Œdipus of Sophocles; but that divine piece muſt have had a ſtrange effect delivered in ſong.

No ſuch notes as were muſical could ſerve the purpoſe, for all men could not uſe them; and every man's peculiar voice, which is as diſtinct as his face, requires and will admit of only its own peculiar inflexions.

The art of delivering a ſentiment juſtly can never therefore be dictated by rule. The cadences are no more to be learned by note, than by imitation. All hear how Mr. Garrick ſpeaks Richard, all admire when Mrs. Cibber recites Alicia: but they cannot execute it after them by ear, nor would be able to do it by note, were every accent put down upon paper; nay, if they could, it would not ſucceed. Theſe cadences ſuit their voices, but would no more fit another than their cloaths.

The way to acquire a method of ſpeaking juſtly, is firſt to avoid the common faults of the ſtage; the greateſt is, that tone yet continued among the leſſer actors. When all formal cadence is laid aſide, a proper underſtanding of the paſſion will inſtruct the perſon to pronounce it naturally; and this, a little enlarged, as the ſtrokes of the picture for a diſtant view; and as in the other inſtance, enlarged without

without diſtortion, will give the truth of recitation.

What has been hitherto ſaid, regards principally tragedy, but with a very few additions, it may all be extended to comedy. There are paſſages in comic poets, where an ironical majeſty, and a cant declamation is to be kept up; but theſe are always obviouſly pointed out to the actor; in the reſt, as comedy comes nearer to ordinary nature than tragedy, the recitation is to be yet leſs exalted above the manner of ordinary ſpeaking. Articulation is a vaſt article in the comedian's voice; but with this alone, and without the common faults which ſome tranſplant out of the other part, a player will ſeldom fail of a true recitation.

It is to be lamented, that we have at this time fewer players of eminence in comedy than tragedy. Mr. Garrick has this truth of recitation in all his comic characters, to an abſolute perfection. It will ſeem ſingular, but I think him greater in comedy than tragedy. His Ranger is almoſt farce; but that is the author's doing; and Woodward had reaſon, when he degraded that gentleman into an Harlequin. Mr. Garrick's Benedict, I think, equal to his Richard, tho' the beauties of

his playing are leſs ſtriking in their nature. I thought as much of Mr. Quin: after all that I have ſaid of his Comus, I think it more than equalled by his Falſtaff. Mr. Palmer has much of this truth of recitation; and we ſhould ſee yet more of it in Mr. Dyer, if a peculiarity of manner did not hide it in him yet more than in the other.

Rhyme is a terrible enemy to natural ſpeaking, and even meaſure breaks in upon it often. Natural ſpeaking, and true recitation are the ſame in all things but degree, and comedy that is free from theſe incumbrances, ought to be ſpoke more truly.

CHAP. XXVI.

Concerning a declamatory recitation.

MANY have ſuppoſed an air of declamation natural to tragedy, becauſe of the grandeur and ſublimity of its manner. But things may be ſublime without being pompous; and in this, in a very great degree, conſiſts the difference between tragedy and oration. Nothing can be more different in their nature, and there-

therefore no rule made for the one, ought to bind the other. Nay, that declamatory tone and manner ſo ſpoken of among the ancients, was not univerſal, even in their orations. We will believe that the panegyric of Iſocrates was meant for all the parade of formal recitation; but the flights and figures of Demoſthenes, called for another manner. We know the author of them had nothing of that ſounding voice, and muſical cadence, for which his antagoniſts were renowned; but with all the diſadvantages a man could have as a public ſpeaker, he commanded the hearts, ſouls, and paſſions of the Grecian people; and baniſhed *Æſchines*, and made even Philip tremble.

The plays of Rowe and Otway have many parts that will bear this oſtentatious, formal, and oratorial manner of recitation, for they are florid, pompous, and deſcriptive. But thoſe of Shakeſpear charm us with the fire and fury of Demoſthenes, and they ſhould be ſpoken as that immortal Greek pronounced his ſimilar pieces, with rapidity and force, and freedom and variety. They ſay that Shakeſpear acted ill himſelf; more probably he ſpoke them thus, and a debauch-

ed taſte in the age condemned him for his excellence.

Having mentioned what is the proper elevation of tragic ſpeeches above common language, Force; it is neceſſary to caution ſome, that by force is not meant loudneſs, but energy. The greateſt obſtacle to true recitation is, the ſtraining the voice: and this many attempt, ſuppoſing noiſe to be that force we ſpeak of. Miſs Noſſiter was faulty in this at her firſt appearance; but ſhe now gives twenty times the force to the great ſoliloquy in Juliet, and principally by abating of her loudneſs. He who throws at a mark, miſſes his aim, if he indulges his fury; it is ſo in ſpeaking: in ſtriving to be loud, people grow out of tune, and all is diſcord.

The ſecond obſtacle to truth in recitation, is monotony. This many have run into from an affected declamatory manner, for the cadences in this form of ſpeaking are too ſimilar, Of this fault there are three diſtinct kinds. The one is an eternal ſameneſs of tone and pronounciation: this is the fault of only the worſt players, and always ariſes from their attempts at the declamatory manner. The ſecond, is a ſameneſs in the cloſe of all periods; this the old players ſeem to have been, in general,

neral, guilty of. The third kind of monotony is, a repetition of the ſame accents and inflexions, on all occaſions. This is too much the fault of the moſt conſiderable of the preſent players. Many are monotoniſts of this kind, who never were accuſed of it. In general, whether we ſee Jaffeir, or Lear, or Chamont, or Othello, the inflexions of the voice are too much the ſame in the performer. This is not in nature; but there ſeems a merit in certain modulations of voice to the player himſelf; and being applauded for them in one part, he repeats them in twenty.

In comedy there is little danger of this, becauſe where every thing is dictated by nature, there is no place for what is ſo unnatural; but in tragedy it is very difficult to guard againſt it. The poet is often to blame; and by cloſing his ſenſe with the line, he forces the player to recite it in an uniform manner. All have affected to admire Milton's blank verſe; it is an article of its merit, that the ſenſe does not terminnte with the line, but runs into the next, and renders a variety in the reading neceſſary; it is ſtrange this ſhould have been ſo over-looked: but the writers of tragedy ſeldom imitate him in this great beauty, and they force that

ſameneſs upon the player which is in themſelves.

Another thing that leads to monotony, is the not conſidering the nature of the paſſage. When ſome violent paſſion is to be expreſſed, no force of voice can be too great; but when it is only a moral ſentiment, this lofty and ſonorous voice, and pompous manner, are bombaſt and ridiculous. He who does not diſtinguiſh where there is variety in the part, will never have any in his playing.

Some alſo ſplit upon a rock where they expect the happieſt paſſage; they have found, that in the expreſſion of ſome one paſſion, the audience has particularly approved them, and they will be always employing the ſame expreſſion. A woman, whoſe tears become her, ſhall cry where ſhe ought to be joyful; and a man that has been applauded for his anger, will be in a rage when nothing is the matter: we have inſtances of both theſe faults; people who always whine, or who always ſcold, be what will the circumſtances; nay, we have one player, who in every part that is put into his hands, does both together.

We have ſome whoſe feeling runs away with their judgment, and having occaſion

to

be violent ſometimes, they are ſo throughout. Torriſmod, who is to be bold and violent in declaring his love to his haughty rival, is not ſo noiſy when he ſpeaks to his friends. If we have not that neceſſary moderation in the player, which ſhould diſtinguiſh between occaſions of anger, and the abſence of provocation, we have a noiſy ruffian, not an hero, who is terrible when provoked: and without this we never can expect the truth of recitation.

Our actors of the ſecond claſs think they have nothing more to do than to expreſs the paſſions of their part as they ſhould feel them: but they are to remember, it is not as themſelves, but as the characters they repreſent, would feel, that we expect to ſee them: not as common perſons, but as heroes, and people of exalted rank and ſentiments, would feel them. The actreſſes run more into theſe faults than the men. Marcia is either altogether devoted to tenderneſs, or altogether filled with the love of her country. The poet meant her neither altogether one, nor altogether the other; but from the predominance of one or the other, according to the circumſtances, ariſes the real beauty of the character. When we ſee it acted thus, we ſhall ſee an actreſs come ſomewhat nearer

to the truth of recitation in that part than we have yet ſeen any.

CHAP. XXV.

Of the being perfect in remembering the words.

WHEN fruit has hung very long upon the bough, it is ſaid to be rotten ripe: our players have, on this expreſſion, formed another regarding their parts; when a man is very perfect in the words of his character, they ſay he is rotten perfect; and they always name this as a circumſtance of great advantage. Whatever may be ſaid of the propriety of the phraſe, it is ſtrange that when they are ſo conſcious of the advantage of that perfect remembrance of the words which it expreſſes, they do not take more pains to poſſeſs themſelves of it.

This is in every man's power that is at all qualified for the ſtage; for the firſt article of his qualification is to be memory: and till this is obtained, there is not the very foundation laid for any other excellence. He who does not perfectly re-

member what he is to ſay, in vain knows how he ſhould ſpeak it. He who is not perfect can never be eaſy; and were it thence alone, he could never have any grace in his manner: nor is it poſſible that he ſhould deliver or expreſs any thing as he ought, whoſe attention is all taken up in recollecting what he is to ſay. The leaſt part of the difficulty in the player's profeſſion is the implanting the words of his part in his memory, but it is the moſt eſſential; and it is not more contemptible to ſuppoſe, that a perſon can play a part, becauſe he has it by rote, than to imagine the greateſt player in the world could go thro' it tolerably who had not.

A free ſpirit and a great diſcernment are very neceſſary to the player, but memory more than all. We are pleaſed with the acting more than the reading a play, becauſe the illuſion is kept up, and the ſcenes appear; but this depends, as a firſt principle, on their being remembered perfectly. The Italians throw in ſpeeches of their own in comedy, and they pleaſe, becauſe new; but here we have a better judgment: nothing is, or ought to be ſo offenſive as theſe interpolations. In the laſt age it was ſuffered. Norris was famous for it, now it is never permitted;

the poet is a better judge what ſhould be ſaid, the actor has enough to do, to find how beſt to ſpeak it.

A perfection in the player is the hiding himſelf under his character. Mr. Milward had great merit, but he was Mr. Milward in every thing: whether he played Harry the fourth, or Mr. Sealand, Sciolto or Bajazet; it was ſtill Mr. Milward repeating thoſe parts, tho' he repeated them well. Mr. Garrick had once a great deal of this, but a more mature judgment has now greatly got the better of it. The firſt ſtep toward throwing off a man's ſelf in any character, is his perfectly remembering the words: elſe he not only every where feels himſelf, but himſelf as the player rather than the character, not ſwelling with the paſſions of the hero, but dreading he ſhall forget his part.

We ſee the beſt actors much inferior to themſelves when they play a new part. They ſuppoſe it is the terror of not hitting every paſſion; it is the confuſion of not being certain of their memory. He who has often played a character is quite eaſy as to the words, and all his mind is employed about his deportment; he naturally therefore ſucceeds. We ſee as much readineſs in Mr. Garrick as any player ever poſ-

poſſeſſed, yet his firſt nights of Macbeth and Jaffeir were ſtrangely inferior to the reſt; and had he played Othello often, tho' perhaps he was wiſe to decline it, he would have ſucceeded in it more.

Mr. Ryan is practiſed greatly in many parts, and the advantage he receives from it is vaſt; he could not be what he is in Edgar, if he were not as eaſy about the words, as if they were his own; and in that famous ſpeech of the prince of Wales to his father, who has reproached him with his ill life, the contrition, the reſolution, the gallantry, and the ſolemnity that ſucceed to one another in the words, follow as happily in the player's manner; we ſee them in his eye, while we hear them from his tongue; and when at the laſt adds, after his vow to combat Piercy,

The which if I perform, and do ſurvive,
I beſeech your majeſty may ſalve
The long grown wounds of my intemperance;
If not, the end of life cancels all bond,
And I will die, &c.

we feel, with the king, a real joy in the reclaimed youth, and all is nature. We ſee

ſee in this, that Mr. Ryan not only remembers what he is to ſpeak next, at the moment when he is to ſpeak it; but in every part of the ſpeech he recollects what is to follow. In the whole, this makes all of a piece; and it is hence he owes this great appearance of nature and reality. The perfect player ought indeed to remember the ſubſtance of every other perſon's part as well as have a remembrance of the words of his own; for he will be a young actor as long as he lives, who follows the young actor's practice of knowing when he is to ſpeak by the words of his cues.

There is one thing more, on which the truth of repreſentation in a great meaſure depends; it is foreign to the player, but the manager muſt add it, or elſe all that has been inculcated will be ineffectual. This is the ſcenery and decorations.

Something is neceſſary in this, but too much is faulty; we ſhould not have the ſcenes of a play like thoſe of an Engliſh pantomime, or an Italian opera; becauſe we would not have them engroſs that attention which is more due to the player. If, for this reaſon, we do not expect, or deſire, to ſee real ſheep upon the wooden plain, or temples change into rocks, or deſerts riſe to groves and gardens; yet we would

would not ſee a lady pulling off her capuchin in the ſtreet, or hear the converſation of a couple of rakes in a lady's bed-chamber. The changes muſt not be violent nor many, but there muſt be ſome. Even where the conduct of the play does not require it, the imagination of the audience does; the eye is tired with the ſameneſs, even tho' it be proper: We have had a late inſtance of this.

In the play of Phædra and Hippolitus, the author has obſerved the unity of place ſo well, that all the ſcenes are tranſacted in one ſpot, in an outer court of the palace. Mr. Garrick ſaw this, he had a good ſcene prepared, and it ſtood the whole time of the play. The manager was right; criticks will ſay the author alſo was right; but the audience was diſguſted.

The dreſs of the player is another article in which we expect a conformity to nature; but this we expect in vain, eſpecially in the women: the characters of an inferior kind are always over-dreſſed: a little of this might be borne, but the exceſs is abominable.

One thing more there is that hurts the truth of the repreſentation more than all; the ſuffering a part of the audience to be behind

the ſcenes. The keeping up the illuſion, and carrying on an appearance of reality, is the great merit of theatrical repreſentation; but that is impoſſible under this diſadvantage. Let the decorations of the houſe, the dreſs and deportment, and recitation of the players be ever ſo proper, this deſtroys all. The head of ſome cropped beau among a ſet of full-bottomed conſpirators, deſtroys all the look of reality. We were vexed the other night at Venice Preſerved, that Garrick, Moſſop, Havard, could have any thing to do with ſuch a ſet of miſerable raſcals as the other conſpirators; but no ſooner did the ſmart head of * * * * pop from behind a wing, than we underſtood them all to be ſcene ſhifters. The dreſs of the player is not only to be ſuited to the part, but to the circumſtances of it. When Oreſtes comes from the tumult at the death of Pyrrhus, there is no diſcompoſure in his perſon. Mr. Barry is pardonable in having his periwig new dreſſed for the fourth act of Romeo, becauſe the poet has removed him to Mantua, and there muſt have been time for ſuch an operation; but when the unities are more preſerved, this affectation is unpardonable. Mr. Garrick, on his firſt night of Mackbeth, came on in one

ſcene

ſcene with his cloaths unbuttoned; and he was right: they adviſed him ill who were the occaſion of his quitting it afterwards. The players are, in general, obſtinate; perhaps it is the misfortune of this gentleman to value other people's opinions more than he ought; for they are generally leſs right than his own.

In fine, the perſon, as well as the dreſs and manner, muſt be ſuited to the character. No woman can ſpeak Jane Shore ſo well as Mrs. Pritchard, but a lady ſo much *en bon point*, makes an odd figure dying of famine. There wants that air of nature, without which no theatrical repreſentation does, or ought, to ſtrike us greatly.

When all theſe collateral aſſiſtances are given, and there is a proper conduct of the whole, we ſhall ſee the *truth of theatrical repreſentation.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

Concerning what is called natural *playing.*

THE term, Playing Naturally, is very frequent in the mouths of actors and of criticks; but they have not aſcertained its meaning. If, by playing naturally, be meant the acting up to nature in the ſeveral characters that are given to be repreſented, doubtleſs it is the conſummate point of theatrical excellence; and all that has been written in this treatiſe tends to it: but many expreſs by it another thing. As ſome players in comedy miſtake an impudent and affected negligence, for politeneſs and eaſe; ſo in tragedy, many mean, by natural playing, the putting on, in the character of an hero, the air and manner of a private perſon. This is faulty in the greateſt degree; it depends upon an error already mentioned, the actor's feeling for himſelf, and not as in his character; and tho' called by this name, nothing can be more unnatural. Natural playing, when it flows from a perfect underſtanding of the whole art and the rules of the profeſſion,

is

is the excellence of theatrical repreſentation; but thoſe who uſe the term, generally employ it to expreſs that dependance upon nature, which excludes all the aſſiſtance of art: and it has been obſerved before, that ſuch nature will never make a player.

That playing which appears natural, becauſe it is diveſted of all pomp and ceremony, is the greateſt that is poſſible; but natural as this appears, it is the reſult of perfect art. Mr. Moſſop gives us an excellent inſtance of this in Pierre. Nothing can be more natural than his relation of what he ſaw before the doors of Jaffeir.

Here ſtood a ruffian with an horrid face,

tho' pronounced without the parade of theatrical recitation, paints us the man. When he mentions the aggravating circumſtance,

Priuli's cruel hand had ſigned it,

there is much more than noiſe in theſuppreſſed indignation that accompanies the words; and when he names the bed which had received his ruined friend to the arms

of

of his adored wife, the tenderneſs that accompanies the delivery, touches us a thouſand times the more, becauſe it is endeavoured to be hidden. The author meant great addreſs and artifice in this ennumeration of the misfortunes of the man Pierre wanted to ſeduce to treaſon; and Mr. Moſſop gives us all his meaning. The leſs there is of pomp in his manner, in this ſpeech, the more it has been ſtudied; and the more natural it appears, the more conſummate has been the art in conducting it.

We have ſeen Mr. Garrick in this character, and we have ſeen Mr. Quin; both excellent. Mr. Garrick had too much fire in this ſpeech, Mr. Quin too much ſolemnity. Mr. Garrick felt as Mr. Garrick, and Mr. Quin as Mr. Quin; but Mr. Moſſop, as Pierre: they did it naturally with reſpect to themſelves; but that is the falſe ſenſe of the word, *natural*, Mr. Moſſop does it as it is natural to the character of Pierre; and this is what truly deſerves the name of natural playing; nor am I able to produce a ſtronger inſtance of it.

In comedy, thoſe characters which appear the moſt familiar, are the moſt difficult. There is more ſkill in dancing a minuet,

minuet, than in cutting a caper. We ſee a multitude ſucceed tolerably in fops, but who is there that can play that natural character, a fine gentleman? No player living. Nothing would appear ſo natural as this character, well played: and this may ſerve as another inſtance of the great difficulty of what is truly natural playing.

CHAP. XXVII.

Concerning what is called force *in playing.*

AN actor is ſaid to give great force to an expreſſion, when he puſhes it to the full extent of the author's meaning. This is often right; and often it is alſo right in the player; nay, it is required of them, in many caſes, to go beyond this: but there are others, in which to be perfectly right, he is to ſtop a little ſhort of it. An author ſometimes goes too far, and ſometimes he miſtakes the expreſſion. Many things are what they are, only in the due degree; and the force of the player is of this number. The painter who goes too far in the groteſque, does not give force to his characters; it becomes grimace;

mace: hyperbole is ridicule, when carried a little too far; and the exceſs of ſublimity is bombaſt. So it is with the player. Force, up to a certain degree, is ſtrength and beauty, but carried a little farther, it converts tragedy into farce. Of this we have too many inſtances. We have Tom Thumb's and prince Volſcius's out of the Mock Tragedy, and the Rehearſal.

A paſſion may authorize great feeling; but when the player carries this to extravagance and madneſs, it is not force he gives to the expreſſion, but he gives ſomething elſe in its place; he does not act his part well, but he plays another; and, to judge by what we ſee of this, a very contemptible one.

In comedy, there are certain characters that cannot be too far ſtrained, but we would no more on the ſtage than on the canvas, have every thing caricature and exaggeration. Men ſay many things in certain converſations, which they would not on any other occaſion: the opportunity of doing this is ſought by the greateſt geniuſes; and it is what they call the pleaſure of talking fooliſhly, the *dulce decipere*; [but it muſt be in *loco*. It is thus in playing; there are certain characters by which an audience is carried into

ſo whimſical an humour, that it will bear any thing, ſuch are Clincher and Trappolin; but for the reſt, the actor muſt be very careful how he lays on the charge. This ſort of force in playing, is like humour in writing, the effect it ſhall have depends more upon the fancy of the reader than the author, and when it is not good, it is execrable. A player cannot be too cautious how he enters upon a thing, the ſucceſs of which depends not upon his merit, but the caprice of his judges.

This force, whether in tragedy or comedy, muſt never be ill placed; and it muſt not be repeated too frequently: in either of theſe caſes, tho' right in itſelf, it will be contemptible.

We often ſee in comedy a ſervant putting on the airs of a perſon of condition. Here a great deal of force is to be allowed; but when ſome other character is to be deceived by the pretenſions, the moment that it is carried to ſo groſs an exceſs that the cheat could not paſs upon the character, it no longer paſſes upon us, but is deſpiſed as aukward, extravagant, and fooliſh. I ſhall not point out inſtances of this; there are too many in thoſe called great players.

We expect exaggeration in a Criſpin, and in a Miſer; but ſtill let even the exceſs have its bounds. Violence is neceſſary in the Miſer, when he looks for a third hand upon his ſervant. Moliere has been cenſured for this by thoſe who did not know that he had it from Plautus. It would be abſurd if done in cool blood; but his confuſion of mind bears it out very well.

Upon the whole, it will be found with reſpect to this, as with all the other of the player's qualifications, he is happy who has this force in his power: but the applauſe he ſhall obtain by the uſe of it, will be wholly owing to the judgment with which he uſes it.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Concerning what are called fineſſes in the art of playing.

THE player who is perfect in the words of his part, who delivers them with judgment, and regulates his deportment by his character, will obtain the applauſe of the greateſt part of his audience, and

and will be ſuppoſed to have done all that is in the reach of his art; but there are judges who require more, and who applaud in proportion.

To pleaſe theſe the actor muſt not only faithfully copy, he muſt throw in many ſtrokes that are original. Some of theſe have been occaſionally named already, and under this article of fineſſes will be comprehended all the others. The writer of a play does not, any more than any other author, ſay all that could be ſaid upon the ſubject. Whatever he has left deficient, the actor may ſupply, not in words of his own adding, but by the ſilent eloquence of geſtures, looks, and pauſes. Many a ſentiment in tragedy halts for one monoſyllable, which the verſe would not allow; the actor may here add, for he may throw this in, and yet by a good delivery hide the redundance. In the ſame manner expreſſion is to be added where the words do not, or cannot convey enough. Whoever has ſeen Mr. Garrick play Iago, or Mr. Macklin the Jew of Venice, cannot be at a loſs for inſtances.

As the actor may ſometimes add a word, there are alſo paſſages he may drop: but this muſt be done with judgment. Mr. Mills uſed to boaſt, that he ſpoke perfectly a

dull ſoliloquy, which Wilks never was able to remember. He was told, and juſtly, that there was more merit in Mr. Wilks's forgetting that, than in all he ever remembered.

Often a ſpeech is very good, but too long; here the fineſſe of the player is happily employed, not in omitting any part, but in paſſing lightly over ſome lines, and pronouncing others with a rapidity that ſeems natural, tho' conſtrained; provided he is ſtrong and full upon the intereſting parts; this will ſeem calculated only to give them force. On the other hand, a ſpeech is ſometimes too ſhort for the occaſion, perhaps alſo too ſlight; the ſame fineſſe will teach him to add to this length by his deliberate recitation, and weight, by the energy which he ſhall beſtow upon paſſages that will ſupport, altho' they do not abſolutely call for it.

Mr. Barry poſſeſſes the happy ſecret of this double fineſſe in a degree ſuperior to all players; and he expreſſes all the variety of it in Caſtalio. It is for this reaſon that Caſtalio, as he plays it, does not appear either languid or inſipid: but in all other hands, it has, in different parts, incurred both theſe charges.

Among

Among the variety of fineſſes which are, and may be practiſed, ſome are appropriated to tragedy, ſome to comedy, and others equally ſerve the purpoſes of both. Every man can talk loud, and many ſuppoſe that to do ſo is to give force and weight to the ſentence. On the contrary, to ſpeak low, but forcibly, is often the true method: and in the ſame manner, when a common actor would have ſollicited applauſe by violence and rage, the great maſtery is to ſeem compoſed. Mr. Garrick often has recourſe to this, and always ſucceſsfully. It is the character of a great ſoul to be above diſcompoſure, unleſs on very great occaſions; and therefore the character will appear the greater, the leſs way is given to paſſion. The greateſt deſigns acquire a new dignity, when the perſon who has laid them, ſpeaks of them without pride or oſtentation. Pierre has laid a ſcheme to ſubvert the ſtate, and the words in which he communicates it to his friend are ſuch, that they may be delivered without force, or with it: but the former method is vaſtly the better; for it adds to the character of Pierre to ſuppoſe, that he deſigned an enterprize like this, and does not value himſelf upon it. Mr. Quin played it

tnus, and Mr. Moſſop alſo does it in this manner. It is eaſy to ſee that it would be mean in Pierre to value himſelf upon the praiſe he ſhould obtain for this; but it is very glorious in him to be above the effect of it.

He who makes too much noiſe about the approach of danger, gives cauſe to ſuſpect that he is not well prepared for it; if not, that he fears it. The player may often take his example from what he has heard in real life. Sir, ſaid one, as the enemy were advancing in a late deſperate encounter, Do not you ſee they are coming upon you; was you never in an engagement before? Yes, general, replied the officer to whom this was ſpoken, in ſo many, that I can ſee one without diſcompoſure. Every one will ſee where the praiſe is due in this inſtance; and he cannot do better who is to act an hero, than to copy one.

Theſe are the great fineſſes of the player; they ſupply by art what is juſt contrary to the rude and immediate dictate of nature. Applauſe is often obtained by obeying implicitly her impulſe, but it is better to deſerve this reward than to obtain it.

It

It will appear from theſe inſtances, that an elevation of ſoul is neceſſary to the playing tragedy well, and judgment is as neceſſary to preſcribe when theſe fineſſes ſhall be introduced, as of what nature they ſhall be. A plain ſentiment often wants that weight which this force of the player can give it; and when the author has thrown together a multitude of ſtrained figures, the actor can ſave his credit by delivering them ſlightly. The great care in uſing this fineſſe in tragedy, is, that the attention to the character be not loſt, while ſo much is beſtowed on the artifice. The majeſty of the hero muſt be preſerved, together with the addreſs of the player. The characters of the old heroes demand more of this; for we are taught early to reverence them. We do not pay ſo much regard to a Torriſmond or an Altamont, as to a Cato, or a Brutus; and perhaps it would be proper to adapt a middle kind of ſpeaking to theſe, ſomewhat elevated above the higheſt comedy, and yet ſomewhat below the full dignity of tragedy, when the heroes of antiquity are its characters.

The criticks diſtinguiſh between what they call genteel comedy, and what they name low comedy, giving a vaſt prefe-

rence to the former, but the difference is, in reality, only in the rank of the character; for there is as much merit in Tom as in young Beville; and it is, at leaſt, as proper a character for comedy: and it may be added, that till Mr. Barry played this Beville, there was generally as much merit in the player who acted the man as in him who did the maſter. Did any body but Mr. Barry play it now at Covent-Garden, there would be more; for Mr. Dyer is very excellent in this footman.

The occaſions of fineſſe in comedy are innumerable, and it is the player's buſineſs to employ them all; for here he is not under any reſtraint, altho' in tragedy under a great deal. Mr. Shuter is, of all the comic players of this time, the perſon who has moſt of theſe fineſſes: they are almoſt innumerable, and they always are thrown in naturally; for no perſon ever was maſter of more natural humour; and to his praiſe, none ever ſhewed ſo few attempts of forcing it.

Theſe circumſtances offer continually, and they preſcribe of themſelves what ſhall be done; the player's great point is to have the courage to obey theſe dictates, however new or unprecedented. Men are allowed

allowed to have humour for ſaying every thing that comes uppermoſt; in the ſame manner the comic actor will be allowed merit for doing all that occurs naturally from the preſent incident to his imagination. A miſer ſees two candles burning, he puts out one of them; a fellow who affects extravagance ſcatters his money, and when people are out of ſight picks up every ſixpence. Theſe things are not ſet down in the part; but it would have been to the poet's credit if they had; and the actor will always be praiſed for adding them. Many loſe the merit of what they do in this way, becauſe it is ſuppoſed the author's. On the contrary, Mr. Macklin ſo happily joined himſelf to his comic characters, that many a good thing of the author's has been underſtood to be a fineſſe of his own.

Every good character in comedy is a mixed one; and the great ſource of theſe fineſſes, is the decompoſing it, or conſidering the ſeveral others of which it is compoſed, and by that means finding what each would inſpire. The player of what has been called low comedy, but may better be called humorous comedy, will find a vaſt pleaſure in the peculiarities of particular people; theſe he will do well

to obſerve carefully, and to copy ſtrictly. This is to *catch the manners living as they riſe*, and being nature, and as ſuch common to all men, all parts of an audience will feel it. If the character be that of a footman to ſome inſolent man of fortune, let him mimic the deportment and manner of his maſter; for all in real life do this. If it be a buſtling old courtier, a Polonius, let him improve every occaſion of making a buſtle about trifles; if a fool of the old character, ſuch as Shakeſpear's, let him throw a ſhrewdneſs into his manner when he affects to be moſt ſimple in his diſcourſe; and when he trifles let it be with the air of a philoſopher.

All theſe things add ſpirit and an air of nature to the characters. An author cannot deſcribe them, but he will always be obliged to the actor who introduces them. There are characters in which it is the buſineſs to blunder and be abuſed, ſuch as the Iriſh footmen, and the like: fineſſes are in no parts ſo eaſy as in theſe; but we generally ſee them carried too far.

A mimickry of other perſons concerned in the ſcene is very happy, when it can be introduced with propriety. Their geſtures often may be thus repreſented to themſelves, and ſometimes their tone of voice,

voice, when the words are to be repeated. Mr. Foote's mimickry of his wife's voice in Fondlewife, Lie on your ſtomach, Mr. Spintext is an inimitable ſtroke of this kind. Nothing pleaſes like theſe when they are conducted with judgment and ſpirit; but when they are cold and forced nothing offends ſo much. The people who are on the ſcene together, when no tranſaction of importance is going on, may entertain the audience at one another's expence alſo very happily, by theſe artifices, and all the while keep perfectly up to the ſpirit of their ſeveral characters.

CHAP. XXIX.

Containing ſome rules which ought to be obſerved in the uſe of fineſſes.

AT the ſame time that it has been obſerved how eaſy many of the fineſſes in playing are, cautions have been given that they are to be introduced diſcreetly: in moderation they pleaſe more than any thing the actor can do; but when forced in on all occaſions, they diſguſt.

They muſt never be uſed when they may interrupt the ſcene; for the actor has no right to make one character conſiderable at the expence of another. They are always beſt when they ariſe from what the author has ſet down in the part; and when they are more abſolutely the produce of the player's genius, they are not to be far-fetched. They are always unpleaſing when they are ſtrained; and hateful when they contradict the nature of the part. The actor has no buſineſs to introduce cunning into a character the author has drawn ſimple; nor is he to do any thing that expreſſes wiſdom or preſence of mind, when he is in a circumſtance of confuſion. In ſhort, where fineſſes cannot be introduced without miſrepreſenting the character, the plaineſt playing in the world has more merit than their fulleſt perfection.

The Roſalind of Mrs. Pritchard abounds with fineſſe, but it is all in character. It was to this ſhe owed her great reception in that part, and ſhe deſerved it; for nothing ſhews more the true ſpirit of the player. In Iago Mr. Garrick ſhews an infinite deal of fineſſe alſo; but he regulates himſelf ſo, that there are ſome parts of the character in which he ſpeaks altogether plainly. When he declares his deſign upon

on Caſſio, he punctually obſerves this; Mr. Macklin did it before him, and the ſucceſs is obvious. Every other actor is ridiculous in that paſſage; theſe are excellent. The character is full of occaſions for fineſſe and bye-play, but we are pleaſed to ſee them all let alone where they would be improper.

It is a good rule, never to uſe fineſſe, but where the ſucceſs of it is certain; for when it fails, it does more than fail, it is not only uſeleſs but ridiculous.

CHAP. XXX.

Concerning bye-play, or what are commonly called ſtage-tricks.

AMong the number of fineſſes might be reckoned what are to be treated of here diſtinctly; but it has been a cuſtom to call them by a ſeparate name. They are properly fineſſes of the loweſt kind; they conſiſt entirely in action; and they are, in general, within the province of the meaneſt players, tho' ſometimes the beſt have recourſe to them.

What is here intended to be ſpoken of is additional action introduced by the player to make the ſentiment more ſtriking, or to repreſent it in a more pleaſing manner: it contributes to give the ſcene a greater air of truth and reality.

The kicking down the chair by Mr Garrick, when the ghoſt of his father, in Hamlet, enters in the cloſet ſcene, was a piece of bye-play introduced very happily in tragedy. This may ſerve to ſhew how it may be introduced in the greateſt ſcenes; but let the judgment of that player ſhew how all bye-play is to be regulated. Happy as this was, he had the moderation not to repeat it conſtantly; for then it becomes a very ſtage-trick, and is contemptible. The Beggar ſent with a letter to the Royal Merchant, picks his pocket, while he reads it; and afterwards when he has brought him money, hems, ſneezes, and makes every other noiſe that could ſeem accidental, to put him in mind not to go away, without rewarding him: all this is proper, and it is natural. The poet has not preſcribed it, but the actor aſſiſts him happily by adding it. Mr. Arthur, who excels in this character, has alſo a very happy art

in

in other reſpects, of adding to the ſcene by his bye-play. Mr. Shuter has alſo a good deal of it, and regulates it with judgment. In general, the good players in humorous comedy have moſt of it; as they have moſt occaſions alſo for it.

In theſe ſcenes a ſingle actor does the whole himſelf; but there are many occaſions on which two or more may join one another in the ſcheme very ſucceſsfully. In this caſe the whole ought to be concerted and rehearſed together as well as a regular ſcene of the play; and it will have a fine effect upon the audience, who conſider it as extemporary and natural. The Italians are excellent in this; and they vary it continually. We were charmed with the action of a ſcene in one of the late burlettas, and calling for it over again, the performers demanded a double applauſe, for they gave it us as good, bu perfectly different

It is wrong for an actor, by ever ſo good a ſtroke of bye-play, to take off the attention from another, whom the conduct of the piece makes more important. Upon the whole, it is eaſy to do wrong, even where the thing itſelf, as it regards the player only who performs it, is right; and

and it is very eaſy to exceed and repeat the tricks too often.

Nothing pleaſes more than this bye-play, under due regulation; but nothing is ſo diſguſtful and offenſive, when it is forced upon us, or interrupts a ſcene, or is reiterated. As the Italians are the moſt excellent in it, from them we ought to take our models; they have two rules, that it be always natural, and always new.

CHAP. XXXI.

Concerning variety in playing.

WE not only expect that the ſeveral actors in a comedy ſhould be different from one another; but if each is not different from himſelf on many occaſions, we ſhall never allow him the praiſe of a conſummate actor. This is in nature, and therefore we require it on the ſtage. No man is the ſame at all times; no actor therefore ſhould be ſo. On this depends that variety which we ſo greatly eſteem, and on a power of which is grounded a great deal even of Mr. Garrick's praiſe. It is required in tragedy as well as in comedy,

medy, but not ſo often, becauſe that is elevated above common life. Much has been ſaid in the preceding pages on this ſubject; the caution here will be to add, without repetition.

The ſame air, and the ſame tone of voice may, in a great degree, ſuit a Polydore and a Lothario; and tragedy, as well in thoſe more familiar as in its moſt heroic characters, abounds with inſtances of this kind; but in comedy the variety is endleſs. Mr. Garrick has ſhewn us, that the ſame perſon can act Captain Plume and Abel Drugger; but we ſhould have been aſtoniſhed to have heard them in the ſame tone of voice, or to have ſeen any thing in the one part of all that characterized the other.

Heroes are alike, but the moſt ſingular characters of comedy are not ſo. Gomez is a Miſer as well as Mr. Lovegold, but there is an eſſential difference between them; and he who ſhould be able to act one of them ever ſo well, would be yet a ſorry player if he had not comprehenſion to ſee the diſtinct nature of the other, and variety to expreſs all that he comprehended. This depends upon a rule eſtabliſhed before, that all characters are to be conſidered as mixed, not ſimple: the

obſervation need not be repeated here, but the reſult of it is obvious.

In tragedy, Oreſtes and Edgar are both mad, and they are both lovers; but they have nothing elſe in common between them. He who ſhould be able to expreſs madneſs, might thence ſuppoſe he ſhould be able to play them; but Mr. Ryan, who acts both, ſhews us by his variety in them, that he who did not know the characteriſtick of each, would never play either well. There is a vaſt difference between the ſon of Glouceſter couterfeiting diſtraction, and complaining of the foul fiend and the cold wind, and Oreſtes truly agitated by the furies.

The mad part of Edgar has been the principal attention of moſt who have played it; but in this Mr. Havard and Mr. Ryan both agree, they make it only a foil to the ſerious and truly paſſionate; our imaginations have been tickled with the freaks of the mad Edgar, but our hearts are pierced when we ſee him aſſuming reaſon, tell the dear object of his wiſhes,

My father ſeeks my life, which I preſerv'd
In hopes of ſome bleſs'd minute to oblige
Diſtreſs'd Cordelia.

We

We ſhudder when he tells her, that this hope, and this intent had weighed with him,

To feed on offals, and to drink with herds,
To combat with the winds, and be the ſport
Of clowns; or what's more wretched yet,
their pity.

But when he requeſts her to retire to reſt, and tells her he will prepare the neceſſary means of it,

Then fierce and watchful as th' Heſperian
dragon,
Will watch beſide her, and protect her ſleep,

we reverence the noble conſtancy and glorious reſolution.

In this view we not only ſee how different Edgar is from Oreſtes, but how different Edgar is from himſelf, in the different circumſtances; nor is there a character in the Britiſh theatre that gives more example of that variety which is the ſubject of the preſent conſideration.

There cannot be a greater diſtinction between even the moſt diſtant paſſions, than there is between the mimicked frenzy of Edgar, and that real diſtraction in which

which Oreſtes burſts forth into his exclamations,

See, Pylades, behold
I am encompaſs'd with a ſea of blood,
The crimſon billows!
——now, now I blaze again. See there,
A ſhoal of furies have thus ſwam about me.
Hark how they hiſs. See, ſee the flaming
brands.
O I am ſtung to death.

This is not only madneſs, but it is the very madneſs of Oreſtes. The poet has characterized it, according to all that is written of the hero, and Mr. Ryan makes us feel all that he has expreſſed, and more; but ſtill all proper and peculiar to the character. He has undoubtedly ſtudied the hiſtory as much as the original author, or the tranſlator of this play, and he inforces all they have written by adding much more in his tone, geſture, and expreſſion, than they could convey in mere words.

We are apt to grow tired with a repetion of the ſame character, tho' ever ſo well written; and, as it is ſuppoſed, tho' ever ſo well played. Romeo is perhaps a ſingle inſtance of the contrary. But the

the fault is, that theſe characters are not ſo well played as they might be. The actor thinks he does enough, if he makes a new character different from all others; but the true variety is to make it in ſeveral parts different from itſelf. This is natural, for the ſame man actuated by different paſſions, will expreſs himſelf differently: and this is the thing wanting in Romeo. The great players have copied it from one another, and they ſucceed accordingly. But in this character they have copied one another too ſtrictly.

Whoever was the inventor of the famous attitude in which Romeo raiſes the iron to daſh out the intruding Paris's brains, both do it alike; and let it be ſaid, for there are great ſupporters of the opinion, both wrong. Vaſtly as this attitude is applauded, it is falſe. The weapon of a gentleman is his ſword, he naturally has recourſe to it, and no other. Charles the twelfth of Sweden was killed by a cannon ſhot; the ſtroke was inſtantaneous, but the motion proper for Romeo, in this caſe, followed as if mechanical: he fell with his hand upon his ſword.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXII.

Concerning graces in playing.

GRaces are to the player in tragedy, and in genteel comedy, what thoſe ſtage-tricks, and that bye-play which have been mentioned, are to him whoſe province is low comedy; he may play with juſtice, yet without theſe little aſſiſtances he will in many places be cold; the other character may be juſt, natural, expreſſive, and properly varied; and yet, for want of grace he may be aukward, and loſe half his power in pleaſing. An audience will be pleaſed, but they will not be charmed with him; and they will often give more applauſe to another who has leſs merit, becauſe he has theſe graces.

He who has true dignity, will always ſucceed in tragedy; for all the graces which belong to that peculiar ſpecies of playing, are compriſed in that ſingle circumſtance; and the ſame may in genteel comedy be ſaid of elegance.

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